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ETHNICITY, NATIONALISM AND NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA, 1970-1992

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the relationship between ethnicity and nation-building and nationalism in Nigeria. It is argued that ethnicity is not necessarily incompatible with nationalism and nation-building. Ethnicity and nationalism both play a role in nation-state formation. They are each functional to political stability and, therefore, to civil peace and to the ability of individual Nigerians to pursue their non-political goals.

Ethnicity is functional to political stability because it provides the basis for political socialization and for popular allegiance to political actors. It provides the framework within which patronage is institutionalized and related to traditional forms of welfare within a state which is itself unable to provide such benefits to its subjects. Ethnicity as identity and as pragmatic pursuit of economic and political advantage are, therefore, the routes to the political centre and so contribute to the legitimacy of the state.

Nationalism is functional to political stability because it legitimates state power. However, as an elite ideology to legitimate the control of state power and struggles for it, nationalism articulates ethnicity and destabilizes the society, creating an identity crisis for individuals and communities. As the people increasingly resort to religion to correct their identity crisis, new political actors arise to challenge the existing order, using established religious ideologies to criticise and challenge the oppressive structure of elite-led secular nationalism. The Nigerian experience demonstrates that nationalism is best understood as a result of a continuous tradition in which legitimation claims of a social order are sustained and challenged rather than the result of modern industrialization.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | |
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| <i>Wazobia</i> | a term fabricated from the three major languages using the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo words for come respectively (<i>wa</i> Yoruba, <i>zo</i> Hausa and <i>bia</i> Igbo). |
| <i>Naira</i> | major unit of Nigerian currency |
| <i>Kobo</i> | minor unit of Nigerian currency |
| <i>agbada</i> | Yoruba dress |
| <i>babariga</i> | Hausa for similar dress |
| <i>juju</i> | Yoruba music |
| <i>owambe</i> | Yoruba dance |
| <i>adire</i> | tie-and-dye (traditional batik) cloth |

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This thesis is dedicated to the greater glory of God.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ABU | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria |
| AFRC | Armed Forces Ruling Council |
| AG | Action group |
| CAN | Christian Association of Nigeria |
| CDC | Constitution Drafting Committee |
| COP | Committee of Patriots |
| CRC | Constitution Review Committee |
| CSSMN | Christian Students' Social Movement of Nigeria |
| CUP | Cambridge University Press |
| DPA | Distributable Pool Account |
| FC | Federal Character |
| FCT | Federal Capital Territory Abuja |
| FESTAC | Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture |
| FLEC | Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda |
| FNLA | Front for the National Liberation of Angola |
| FRCN | Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria |
| FUT | Federal University of Technology |
| GNPP | Great Nigerian Peoples' Party |
| HND | Higher National Diploma |
| IDB | Islamic Development Bank |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Izala</i> | <i>Izalatu bidi'a wa Iqammatu Sunna</i> |
| JAMB | Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board |
| <i>JHSN</i> | <i>Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria</i> |
| JMAS | <i>Journal of Modern African Studies</i> |
| MAMSER | Mass Mobilization for social Justice, Self reliance and Economic Recovery |
| MPLA | Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola |
| MSS | Muslim Students' Society |
| NACRA | National Advisory Council on Religious Affairs |
| NCE | Nigerian Certificate of Education |
| NCNA | National Council for National Awareness |
| NCNC | National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons National Council of Nigerian Citizens (after 1962) |
| NDLEA | National Drug Law Enforcement Agency |
| NEPA | Nigerian Electric Power Authority |
| NEPU | Nigerian Elements Progressive Union |
| NFC | National Festival Committee |
| NIPOST | Nigerian Postal Services |
| NISER | Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research |
| NNA | Nigerian National Alliance |
| NNDP | Nigerian National Democratic Party |
| NNPC | Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation |
| NOM | National Orientation Movement |
| NPB | National Pilgrim Board |

| | |
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| 10 | |
| NPC | Northern Peoples' Congress |
| NPE | National Policy on Education |
| NPN | National Party of Nigeria |
| NPP | Nigerian Peoples' Party |
| NRC | National Republican Convention |
| NTA | Nigerian Television Authority |
| NYM | Nigerian Youth Movement |
| NYSC | National Youth Service Corps |
| OAU | Organization for African Unity |
| OFN | Operation Feed the Nation |
| OIC | Organization of Islamic Conference |
| OND | Ordinary National Diploma |
| OUP | Oxford University Press |
| PRP | Peoples Redemption Party |
| RAOPE | <i>Review of African Political Economy</i> |
| SDP | Social Democratic Party |
| SMC | Student Christian Movement |
| SMC | Supreme Military Council |
| SU | Scripture Union |
| UMBC | United Middle Belt Congress |
| UNITA | United Force for the Territory of Angola |
| UNN | University of Nigeria Nsukka |
| UPE | Universal Primary Education |
| UPGA | United Progressive Grand Alliance |

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| UPN | Unity Party of Nigeria |
| UPP | United People's Party |
| USIS | United States Information Service |
| WAI | War Against Indiscipline |

INTRODUCTION

Traditional sociological wisdom claims that ethnic pluralism is an ephemeral problem. It assumes that inexorable historical forces, such as urbanization, industrialization and secularization, are bound to erode communal identities and produce an overarching loyalty to the state. Such nationalism will transform ethnically divided societies into nation-states. The experience of Nigeria demonstrates, however, that the pursuit of nationalist policies has the effect of further dividing rather than uniting ethnically divided societies.

This study investigates this paradox. Is it that ethnicity and nation-building and nationalism are incompatible? What is the relationship between ethnicity and the intended and unintended processes of nation-building? Why is nationalism divisive in Nigeria?

The major issue explored is how multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria have held together despite their inability to become nations. Although some analysts have noted this paradox,¹ there has not been any systematic attempt to probe how these societies are internally maintained by their constituent ethnic groups or how ethnic and state sentiments have been reconciled. I hope to explain, with the aid of evidence assembled from interviews, observations, and primary and secondary sources, how it is that Nigeria has managed, since the civil war, to avoid either secession or domination by any one ethnic group.

My original theoretical contributions pertain to how compatible ethnicity is with

¹ See for instance, Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1967, p. 302, and R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg, "Popular Legitimacy in African Multi-Ethnic States", *JMAS*, 22, 2, 1984, p. 198.

nationalism and nation-building. I argue that ethnicity can be incompatible with nationalism and nation-building especially if the federal system comprises a small number of large states whose populations are perceived, broadly, as ethnically different. I further argue that ethnicity is not necessarily incompatible with nationalism and nation-building. Under certain conditions such as has obtained in post civil war Nigeria, ethnicity may be beneficial for nationalism and nation-building. An important condition is to increase the number of the constituent states in the federation and breaking up large ethnic states. In Nigeria almost all sections of the population, at least the leaders and representatives of the ethnic groups, recognize that national cohesion cannot occur without their coming to terms with the durability and pertinacity of ethnicity of one sort or the other. Ethnicity as identity and as pragmatic pursuit of economic and political advantage are, in certain contexts, the routes to the political centre. In that way, there is an added contribution, which may be largely unintended, to the legitimacy of the state. The more groups participate in the political centre, and the more effects that has on regional and communal interests and pursuits, the stronger will be the perception of Nigeria as an entity commanding loyalty from its people. It is also recognized that the break-up of Nigeria would not be in the interests of the many minorities who have been able to negotiate political alliances to assert and pursue their interest. Furthermore, even though there are threats from the Muslim north to dominate Nigeria as a whole, this could be contained by the fear that if that leads to secession on the part of other regions the north would be left in a rather poor state.

What all this amounts to is that while ethnicity may, in some circumstances and in some areas of social life, obstruct the growth of national identity and cohesion, it

may not do so in others. Ethnicity, nationalism and nation-building are reconciled through some of the intended and unintended effects that each has upon the others.

All of this discussion assumes that allegiances or interests other than ethnic ones may now and more so in the future, intersect ethnic ties and contribute further to the process whereby ethnic ties adjust to other circumstances. This is already happening with Christian and Islamic identities increasingly displacing ethnic identities in importance in national life. This new setting for the dialectic between ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria is considered an increasingly important factor in legitimating Nigeria's nationhood. Elite-led secular nationalism promised the people salvation from national bondage and personal suffering, instead they became alienated victims of nationalism. Most Nigerians have consequently turned to previously established religious identities as a corrective to disorder and meaninglessness in their lives. The increasing importance of religion in national life is thus both an expression of the identity crisis facing Nigerians and a means of resolving this crisis.

The study is arranged in twelve chapters. The first chapter outlines my theoretical orientation and spells out the means and methods and terms and concepts which I have employed in the study. The nationalist ideologies which legitimize nation-building in Nigeria are examined in Chapter Two. Two major attempts at political engineering, that is the restructuring of the federal system and the related issue of federal character, Nigeria's equivalent of 'ethnic arithmetic', are examined in Chapters Three and Four respectively. Socialization through the educational system and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is discussed in Chapter Five while Chapter Six examines another kind of socialization, that is mass campaigns to generate a popular sense of a homogeneous national identity. Cultural engineering in relation to language,

history, literature, mass media and art festivals is dealt with in Chapter Seven while Chapter Eight examines the state's religious policy. The next three chapters examine the nature of ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria. The theoretical issues examined concern the relationship between ethnic identity and nationalism. If, as traditional sociological wisdom indicates, ethnicity and nationalism are not only different but also mutually incompatible, how are they then harmonized in the individual Nigerian? Are they fundamentally incompatible and prone to conflict or can they, despite their different claims on the individual co-exist in harmony? Ethnicity and nationalism are respectively examined in Chapters Nine and Ten while the increasing importance of religious identities in national life is explored in Chapter Eleven. Chapter Twelve is the concluding chapter in which the argument of the thesis is summarized and its implications for social theory indicated.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORIES OF NATION-BUILDING AND ETHNICITY

Introduction

The success of anti-colonial nationalism in sub-Saharan Africa around the 1960s generated great optimism about the future of the newly independent states. It was commonly hoped and expected that these states would rapidly follow the path of economic, political and cultural development established by European and colonial-settler states. When this proved not to be the case the claims of 'modernization theory' were discredited. One of these claims was that 'nation-building' would rapidly erode traditional 'ethnic' cultural identities and cleavages. Post-modernization theory views ethnicity as a major source of instability for post-colonial states that is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future. If this pessimistic view is correct then sub-Saharan Africa is likely to have a future of civil conflict that will severely hamper attempts to create economic, political and cultural development. Indeed, one may easily produce a list of cases in support of such a view: Katanga in Zaire, Biafra in Nigeria and, more recently, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan, Liberia, Somalia, Kenya and even South Africa. Nevertheless, many multi-ethnic states have existed for decades without any widespread conflict. Even those states which have experienced such violence have normally settled down subsequently to a relatively peaceful existence. No post-colonial state in Africa has yet been permanently divided along ethnic lines (although both Ethiopia and Somalia may do so along demarcations dating from colonial times). This co-existence of state structures and ethnic identities is not adequately explicable in the terms of either modernization or post-modernization

theories. In this chapter I shall firstly elaborate this claim and then attempt to outline a theoretical explanation of this continuing co-existence.

THEORIES OF NATION-BUILDING

For over a century traditional sociological wisdom regarded nation-building as incontrovertibly desirable. Assimilation of cultural groups into a national society was considered a necessary aspect of political and socio-economic development. Ethnic and parochial identities were looked upon as primitive and inimical to progress. Nationalism was hailed as the sentiment that both dissolved atavistic parochial sentiments within divided societies and held together such societies. This view of nationalism made its debut in nineteenth century European history where philosophers like Herder and Fichte described how the new sentiment dissolved the old society with its clerics, kings and local loyalties and then provided a common allegiance that gave the reconstituted societies an unprecedented cohesiveness. This approach lost favour in studies of European societies in the 1950s as nationalism was blamed for the European tragedy, that is the two world wars. The approach, however, found favour in studies of non European societies, particularly the colonial multiplicities that are the focus of this study. Theories of functionalism, social change and conflict, all regarded parochial values and allegiances as inimical to rational social planning and economic progress in the newly independent states of Africa and Asia. They held up nationalism as the ultimate force of social change in these states, claiming that their political stability and economic viability depended on their becoming nation-states in the image of the classical European models.

Many theories and ideas were put forward to explain the transition from ethnicity

to nationalism. The most influential of these ideas, the modernisation school, claimed that the basis of nation-building and the erosion of ethnic identities was modernization. Processes of modernisation such as industrialization and urbanisation would automatically be accompanied by nationalism, that is loyalty to the state. This approach was largely influenced by the ideas of Karl Deutsch who attempted to quantify and measure nationalism by looking at the patterns of social communication. He claimed that the trends in the social mobilisation which accompanies the growth of markets, industries and towns and eventually of literacy and mass communication could do much to decide whether existing national trends in particular countries would be continued or reversed¹. For him, nationality is indicated by the 'complementarity or relative efficiency of communication among individuals'.² His original contribution to the theory of nation-building is in calling attention to all kinds of social and economic factors other than language as the basis for the nation-state.

Theories of 'pluralism' were developed to explain the relationship between unity and diversity in a state. There are two traditions of thought within this school. The first is the pluralistic model, which is essentially a political theory, and the second is the plural society model developed largely by sociologists and anthropologists engaged in the study of the multi-ethnic societies of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

The plural society model was formulated by Furnivall.³ He used the term plural society to describe colonial Burma and Indonesia, claiming that colonial

¹ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1966, p. 188.

² *Ibidem*, p. 188.

³ J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, Cambridge, CUP, 1948.

domination imposed a forced union on the different ethnic groups that socially co-exist within these societies without much social contact. In plural societies, there is no common will, and interaction is involuntary, imposed by colonial power and force of economic circumstance. He argued that democracy was impossible in such a society because it would give power to one group while leaving economic power with others. He suggested a federal state and the fostering of nationalist feelings as solutions to the problem of cultural pluralism. The problem with Furnivall's analysis lies in the assumption that the European states are characterised by a common social will and a common culture. He overlooks the fact that in western democracies voting power is often controlled by one group and economic power by another.⁴

Furnivall's thesis was enlarged by Smith and applied to sub-Saharan Africa.⁵ For Smith, the plural society is composed of socially or culturally defined collectivities separated by autonomous institutional structures. The collectivities are closed corporations bound within a state dominated by one group for whom the state becomes the agency of subjugation. Integration is by force of regulation rather than by consensus. He argued that the transition from plural societies to pluralistic societies was necessary if the African states were to be transformed into cohesive national units. Smith's model has limited analytical value for most African states. Sub-national groups in these states are not institutionally exclusive. The model may, however, be useful for the study of racially stratified polities like South Africa or some of the Caribbean states where the very rigorous conditions of pluralism stipulated by Smith

⁴ David Nicholls, *Three Varieties of Pluralism*, London, Macmillan, 1974, p. 40.

⁵ M.G. Smith, "Institutional and Political Conditions of Pluralism", in Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith, (eds.), *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, (paperback), pp. 27-61. See also "Some Developments in the Analytic Framework of Pluralism", pp. 415-449.

can be approximated.⁶

The pluralistic model postulates two principal bases of social integration in a multi-ethnic state. These are accommodation and elite consensus. National integration is seen as consisting of a complex web of multiple affiliation, intersecting lines of group cleavage and shifting alignments depending on specific issues, and commitment to common values and to the rules of the political game. Ethnic groups are seen as cultural groups whose behaviour is to be analyzed within the context of assimilation and cultural change. Underlying this concept is the notion of the 'melting pot' and the experience of European immigrant groups in North American industrial cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The common point of reference for both the assimilationist and the plural society models is the nation-state. Both assume that the nation-state is the ideal to strive for and that nation-building is necessary and desirable. However, the plural society model is strongly orientated towards the conflictual aspects of multi-ethnic societies while the pluralistic model takes too optimistic a view about man's capacity for rationality. In short, one model is over optimistic and the other over pessimistic. Moreover, both models do not address the key issue of ethnic identity which is essential to any analysis of group conflict and integration. They believe that ethnic and national (state) sentiments are incompatible. It is thus a question of either ethnic groups being assimilated or being in conflict.

Evidence began to show in the 1960s that these theories were faulty about the capacity of modernization to erode parochial sentiments and identities. In the United

⁶ Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1977, p. 18.

States Glazer and Moynihan questioned the idea of the melting pot with the publication of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, a study of ethnic groups of New York City which had appeared when in theory they were supposed to be disappearing.⁷ They claimed that 'the notion that the intense and unprecedented mixture of ethnic and religious groups in American life was soon to blend into a homogeneous end product has outlived its usefulness, and also its credibility.'⁸ In post colonial African and Asian states ethnic divisions continued despite modernization. Agencies regarded as vehicles of integration became divided on ethnic lines. For example, the nationalist parties that fought for independence were regarded by modernization theorists like James Coleman and Carl Rosberg as primary vehicles for integration⁹ but they became divided on ethnic lines immediately after their attainment of independence. Anti-colonial nationalism did not undermine ethnicity as was hoped. In Nigeria, the modernization process produced conflict and ethnicity rather than nationalism.¹⁰ Two of the most traumatic ethnic crises in Africa and Asia during the period were the civil war in Nigeria and the successful bid for independence by Bangladesh. Other evidence of ethnic conflicts from Canada, Belgium and the United Kingdom confirmed that the integration of the modern state into a national state could not be taken for granted.

As a result of this discrepancy between theory and practice nation-building

⁷ Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University and MIT Press, 1963.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. V.

⁹ James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Integration in Tropical Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964.

¹⁰ Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe (eds.), *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism*, Michigan, Michigan State University Press, 1971, p. 2.

theories became discredited. Social scientists having failed to predict the pertinacity of ethnicity reacted by querying the arguments of nation-building theories and focused on ethnicity to the virtual exclusion of nation-building. Lijphart's study of politics in Netherlands, carried the implicit message that ethnicity need not be detrimental to political stability and progress.¹¹ He suggested that social scientists should query the assumption that homogeneity was necessary for democratic institutions to succeed. Walker Connor claimed in a very influential article on the political significance of ethnicity that nation-building was nothing but cultural destruction and political and economic manipulation and domination of ethnic minorities by superordinate groups within multi-ethnic polities.¹² Michael Hechter described the position of ethnic minorities within the nation-state as that of 'internal colonialism'.¹³ Connor, in another article, argued that ethnic groups were indeed nations.¹⁴ A major effect of the new theoretical alignment with ethnicity was that nation-building practice came to be seen as an undesirable and unnecessary activity by theorists. The shift in theoretical orientation also proved fortuitous for the 'tribes' of Africa as they came to be recognized as ethnic groups and nationalities.

The issue with post-modernization theories is that they have been unable to establish as viable theoretical alternatives to nation-building theories. They have

¹¹ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: a Comparative Exploration*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977.

¹² Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?", in *World Politics*, No. 3, April 1972, pp. 319-355.

¹³ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

¹⁴ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic group is a...", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, No. 4, October 1978, pp. 371-400.

partially rejected and partially accepted the ideas of nation-building theories in the hope that for certain areas of study these theories would still be relevant. Although they have disputed arguments for nation-building, they have continued some of the assumptions inherent in the modernization theories. One of these assumptions is that ethnic and national sentiments are mutually incompatible.¹⁵ Such assumptions generally support the contention that national sentiments are lacking in the multi-ethnic states of Africa and that ethnicity is the most destabilizing political factor in these societies. Nationalism is thus granted tacit normative value over ethnicity. Such notions generally define the pessimistic view that sub-Saharan Africa is doomed to a future of civil conflict that will severely hamper attempts to create economic, political and cultural development. Although it is easy to produce a list of cases of ethnic conflicts in Africa, it is nevertheless true that many African states have existed for decades without any widespread conflict. Even those states which have experienced such violence have normally settled down subsequently to a relatively peaceful existence. No post-colonial state in Africa has yet been permanently divided along ethnic lines. In Nigeria, when faced with the decision to break up the country as demonstrated by the war, many more Nigerians opted to keep it, some with their lives. In South Africa where the idea of the ethnic homeland has been pursued such attempts have proved unpopular. Multiculturalism has been preferred by the majority. This co-existence of state structures and ethnic identities is not adequately explicable in the terms either of modernization or post-modernization theories.

Both theories are problematic. Each of them takes an extreme position on ethnicity. One undermines the power of ethnicity and the other embellishes it. Where

¹⁵ See for example, Walker Connor; "Nation-Building Or Nation-Destroying?", *op. cit.*, p. 321.

nation-building theories stress the power of nationalism, anti-nation-building theories stress the power of ethnicity. In relation to post-colonial sub-Saharan African states, nation-building theories are unable to explain the continuation of ethnic divisions and exacerbation of ethnic conflict. Conversely, anti-nation-building theories are unable to explain factors such as the continuation of post-colonial state structures and the pursuit of nation-building policies by the governments of such states, the construction of ethnic political identities in relation to such states, and competition for governmental office and its concomitant benefits by ethnic groups. There is thus a need for a synthesized theory which overcomes the deficiencies of both nation-building and anti-nation-building theories. Such a theory should explain the form of political culture in post-colonial Africa, which is based upon the co-existence of nation-states and ethnic groups, given that both nation-building and anti-nation-building theories assume that ethnicity and nationalism are incompatible.

A SYNTHETIC THEORY OF ETHNICITY AND NATION-BUILDING

Ethnicity and nationalism are compatible. This is so where they are each functional to political stability and, therefore, to civil peace and to the ability of individuals to pursue their non-political goals. Where this is the case there is an effective rationale for people to resist any de-construction of the 'nation-state' along ethnic lines. This is the case in Nigeria.

Nationalism is functional to political stability in Nigeria because it legitimates state power. Popular expectations of nationalism, and the frustration of its aspirations, have been the major factor in legitimizing and de-legitimizing all Nigerian governments

and, therefore in causing their downfalls.¹⁶ They have only been replaced by military officers or party politicians who have successfully appealed to that sense of nationalism. No military coup can succeed unless the public in general desire a change.¹⁷ 'If Dimka, Vatsa and Orka failed in their respective disastrous bids for political power, it is not necessarily because they were more incompetent and inefficient than their successful counterparts, but because the people in general were not, at the time they struck, desirous of a change of administration.'¹⁸

Ethnicity is functional in Nigeria because it provides the basis for political socialization and for popular allegiance to political actors at the level of the central state. The logic of competition in the federal political arena requires that people be mobilised in terms of what matters to them and ethnicity definitely matters in Nigeria. Ethnic identity is a real matter for both social and political calculation and engineering in Nigeria. People use their ethnic ties and cleavages rationally, in order to attain their individual aims, what ever they are. Ethnicity, as identity and as pragmatic pursuit of economic and political advantage are, in certain contexts, the routes to the political centre. In that way there is an added contribution, which may be largely unintended, to the legitimacy of the federal political arena.

The nation-state provides the arena within which ethnic identities are constructed and defined, and within which political alliances may be formed and reformed to the mutual advantage of different ethnic and political groups. It is

¹⁶ I exempt the government of Mohammed/Obasanjo which voluntarily handed over to civilians in respect to popular nationalism. This government had the good judgement to resign whilst it still enjoyed popular legitimacy.

¹⁷ Lateef K, Jakande, "Building a New Nigeria", *Newswatch*, November 5, 1990, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 6. Dimka, Vatsa and Orka led abortive coups.

acknowledged that the break-up of Nigeria would not be in the interests of the numerous minorities who have been able to negotiate political alliances to assert their interests. It is also recognized that the secession of the other regions would not be in the economic interest of the dominant Muslim north.

Ethnicity provides the framework within which patronage is institutionalized and related to traditional forms of welfare within a state which is itself unable to provide such benefits to its subjects. The informal network of patronage which ethnicity provides helps to bridge the elite/mass divide, one of the two conditions which Rosberg and Coleman identified as necessary for integration.¹⁹ 'The average Nigerian' (a popular term used to refer to a typical Nigerian) maintains various ethnic identities and associational networks which he/she and his/her patrons or the state appeals to at various times. These ties are important for negotiating opportunities for self improvement - 'survival' in Nigerian parlance. The type of ethnic group identity prevalent in Nigeria thus differs from the primordialist and the instrumentalist types expounded in both nation-building and anti-nation-building theories which assume that individuals have only one privileged ethnic identity.²⁰

The form of 'nation-state' and of nationalist ideology which have developed in Nigeria are different from those of the European model adopted by classical nation-building theory. Nationalist ideology in classical nation-building theory holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.²¹ The Nigerian nation is a weaker

¹⁹ J.S. Coleman, and C.G. Rosberg, *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, op. cit., pp. 8ff.

²⁰ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 19.

²¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 1. See also John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 3.

form of 'imagined community' than those found in Europe because it co-exists with (and is often secondary to) more immediate forms of popular identity. It is generally the opposite of the ethnically and linguistic homogeneous entities which came to be seen as the standard form of nation-state in the West. It is more of a project the achievement of which is in progress. However, it is a project conceived in the spirit of Mazzini rather than of Uvarov.²²

Nigeria is imagined as a homogeneous unit. The 1979 Constitution described Nigeria as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation-state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigerian nationalism is, then, not unlike the classical European model which emphasizes popular support and national unity. This similarity is underlined by Nigeria's colonial legacy. However, unlike the classical model, Nigerian nationalism accepts that a stable and free society can be based on cultural pluralism, in a multinational state based on political accommodation and democracy. This is why the state pursues nation-building, that is planned policies that combine both a popular nationalist enthusiasm and the inculcation of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system and national institutions, and administrative regulations. Thus, nationalist ideology in Nigeria is more appropriately described as a blend of the European popular and the 'official nationalism' of the Czars.²³

Nigerian nationalism is a dual phenomenon. It exists as both an elite ideology and as a popular feeling. What distinguishes popular nationalism is that it represents

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983, p. 105.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

the common interest against particular interests, the common good against privilege. Unfortunately for Nigeria, whilst nationalism is very effective as an elite ideology, it is very weak as a popular emotion. As an elite ideology, nationalism is used to justify the exercise of state power. This tends to undermine rather than strengthen the appeal of nationalism as a popular emotion as it alienates the vast majority of the people from the state, engendering friction between the people and ruling elites. Therefore despite the high public profile of its hyperbolic rhetoric, Nigerian nationalism largely fails as a means to unite the imagined nation.

Viewed as a dual phenomenon, nationalism would be seen as both integrative and disintegrative. This is why it is able to transform societies. The notion that ethnicity is the most destabilizing factor in African politics would be seen as erroneous. In Nigerian politics, nationalism as an elite ideology for domination of the state is the most destabilising factor. This stems from the close structural relationship between political power, the state and class formation on one hand, and political power and popular democracy on the other. Because the accumulation of wealth and status depends almost entirely on political power, both those who aspire to rule and those who wish to consolidate their rule need secure positions within or near the state. In an authoritarian state such security can be assured, whereas in a democratic state such as Nigeria which lacks social consensus legitimating capital accumulation, it cannot be assured.²⁴ The position of ruling elites is under constant threat, especially during elections. Under such conditions, power elites and aspirants to power can be expected to use all available means to maintain or acquire power, including ethnicity,

²⁴ Larry Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: the Failure of the First Republic*, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 325-6.

electoral fraud and brute force. Elections thus become warfare and rules of the game are disregarded as elites struggle for the state. Such undemocratic politics is the consequence of the idea of nationalism as a guise for the accumulation of capital and the domination of the country by a sectional elite rather than the consequence of ethnicity.

Nationalism must, then, be recognized as a destabilizing process. This is not to argue like Connor that nation-building is the destruction of distinctive cultural groups. The point is that nationalism is a stressful process. It tends to emphasise the adjustments and sacrifices that individuals and communities have to make for the sake of progress. Put differently, nationalism alienates large sections of the society in the quest for modernity. The destabilizing nature of nationalism stems from the process of socio-economic change which goes in tandem with it. Nineteenth century accounts of nationalism romanticised nationalism. In doing this, they gave the impression that nation-building was a smooth and unproblematic process when in fact it brought much suffering and pain to individuals and communities. In other words, nationalism in the European context was not without conflict and divisions. It was both disintegrative and integrative, and consequently transformative. Anthony Smith arrived at a similar conclusion but for him the divisive and disruptive aspect of nationalism lies in the confrontation between the 'scientific state' and traditional religion and belief systems.²⁵ This process of modernization both repels and attracts the rising intelligentsia. 'The crux of the matter was that the 'scientific state' demanded a heavy price for its benefits: it demanded ineluctably the 'privatisation' of religion.'²⁶ The

²⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, London, Duckworth, 1983, p. 256.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

consequence is a 'crisis of faith among the intelligentsia and the clash between reason and revelation, science and tradition, sons and fathers, which so agitates them'.²⁷

Smith, however, ignores the role of economic factors in creating the conditions for the intervention of the intelligentsia. In this study, it is suggested that the basis for the intelligentsia's actions in Nigeria is determined by the close structural relationship between political power, the state and class formation on one hand, and political power and popular democracy on the other. The tension between common good and privileged interests provides the opportunity for the intelligentsia to act.

My argument is not reducible to a simple class analysis. It involves a tension between common and privileged interests on one hand and privileged versus privileged interests on another hand with ethnicity mediating on both levels. It is also not a matter of elites exploiting the masses by exploiting ethnic identity nor a matter of 'false consciousness' on the part of non-elites. It is rather, a matter of both elites and ordinary people exploiting ethnicity. They are both engaged in a reciprocal process in which ethnic ties are used as bargaining tools. Ethnicity, unlike wealth or education or machine guns, or status, is equally available to both elites and non-elites.²⁸ Elites employ ethnicity for electoral mobilization because it is the most readily available and efficient means for such purpose given the country's social circumstances. Non-elites respond to ethnicity because it is the principle of differentiation that is least disadvantageous to them.²⁹ Hence they too are engaged in the manipulation of ethnicity. Both elites and non-elites calculate the sacrifices and

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

²⁸ Lawrence Frank, "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism", *JMAS*, 17,3,1979, p. 451.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 452.

benefits to them and balance these according to circumstances which they may objectively or subjectively define. Such circumstances may be re-defined by the affected individuals and groups at any given time. Thus, it is an exchange in which the elite *chop* and the masses *chop*. '*I chop, you chop*' (meaning I eat, you eat, that is, a quid pro quo) was the name for a party proposed by Fela, a popular musician, for the 1979 elections. The name reflected an awareness of the mundane reality beneath ethnic exchanges, and the nationalist rhetoric of party politics in Nigeria. The key factor in this complex system is reciprocity.

The model of ethnic groups in conflict portrayed by both nation-building and anti-nation-building theories is misleading. It assumes that a relatively united group A confronts a relatively united group B with reference to a specific issue or group of related issues. Many sociological problematic arise from this. How can one explain the existence of the particular issues, the form the conflict has taken, or the particular balance of power that has developed? How does one predict the future outcome of the current situation? The analytical value of such a model of groups in conflict is weakened by its teleological assumptions that the achievement of broad class, national, or ethnic group consciousness, is a normal, ordinary event that is universal and permanent. Yet, the achievement of broad class or ethnic group consciousness is a rare event, often conflictual and even pathological in its end state, but usually partial and short-lived when its appears to have reached such a state.³⁰

In Nigeria, groups in conflict are fundamentally divided within themselves. In each solidary group there are several sub-groups. These sub-groups have actual and potential interaction within and across solidary boundaries. It is thus possible for sub-

³⁰ Paul R. Brass (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and the State*, London, Croom Helm, 1985, p. 22.

categories, for example elites or intelligentsia, from different ethnic groups, to collaborate in relation to common interests while retaining a strong sense of separate ethnic identity. Such inter-ethnic collaboration may be informal or formal. This is most evident in politics. For instance, the identity used by Akintola and Awolowo in their struggle for political leadership in the Western Region in the First Republic was not the pan-Yoruba identity but their Yoruba sub-group identity. In both the First and Second Republics elites from different ethnic groups entered into multi-lateral, bi-lateral and trans-ethnic alliances which alternated according to changing circumstances. The Hausa/Fulani-controlled National Party of Nigeria (NPN) entered into an alliance with the Igbo-controlled Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP) to form the federal government in the Second Republic just like they did in the First Republic. During the Second Republic, Governors of the five Oil States, belonging to three rival political parties - two UPN, two NPN and one NPP - bridged the bitter political divisions between their parties to unite in a common position over their share of the federated account.

The analytical implications of the Nigerian model are immense. This is because it is attentive to patterns of intersectional communication and collaboration between segments of separate ethnic groups, and between the state and particular sub-groups or groups. The relationship between the state and particular groups is very crucial as the state may be pursuing its nation-building to the advantage of particular groups within it. A major reason for the salience of ethnicity in modern and modernizing states is that it is often intimately related to issues of domination, hierarchy and stratification.³¹ In Nigeria, the place and role of the Hausa/Fulani in nation-building

³¹ A.L. Epstein, *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1978, p. 114.

is a crucial one. Their domination of political power in Nigeria since independence is a source of frustration and anger for other Nigerians and consequently it is seen as critical to the national question in the country.³² The domination of power by this group is more interesting as the group is economically backward in relation to its two major rivals, the Yoruba and the Igbo. It is curious that an economically disadvantaged group can maintain political power over its economically more progressive and powerful rivals that occupy contiguous geographic areas. This skewed balance of power has sorely affected integration in Nigeria. It was the attempt to change it that led to the Nigerian Civil War. Other evidence from Africa, for instance Uganda and the Sudan, demonstrates that alliance between the state and some sectional groups is strenuous for integration.

One way that Nigeria has attempted to deal with this problem since the war is structural, that is by establishing a more plural federation and by constitutional rationalism. The new political changes have largely emancipated both the minorities and the state from the stranglehold of the three major ethnic groups whose security dilemma over the state brought Nigeria to the brink of dissolution. Because of the break-up of the three ethno-regional political blocs into smaller political units, the Nigerian state is now in a much more stronger position than it was in the period before the war. None of the new units is in any position to challenge its authority and power as was the position before the war when legitimation of the state proved impossible to obtain. A strong Nigerian state means that the state has the capability to direct a positive focus of loyalty from its people to itself. As Leonard Tivey has claimed 'the

³² Obaro Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", *Africa Events*, April, 1987, p. 35.

state does not merely reflect the qualities of nations, it fashions them'.³³

Despite its enhanced power, the Nigerian state continues to be associated with Hausa/Fulani Muslim domination. However, the Hausa/Fulani threat could be contained by the fear that if that leads to secession on the part of other regions that would leave the Muslim north a rather poor state. It is thus in the economic interest of the Hausa/Fulani to keep Nigeria one.

The division of the country into smaller political units has given prominent expression to the uncommon ethnicity of the numerous minority ethnic groups who together make up about half of the population. Ethnic relations in Nigeria has been approached from a tri-polar perspective of power-conflict between Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups. Such an approach is based on a faulty premise that the politics of Nigeria is the politics of ethnic majorities. It ignores the influence of the numerous minority ethnic groups who altogether constitute the other half of the population and consequently retards the understanding of the revolutionary and legitimation potentials of ethnic identities in nation-building. In this study, it is recognized that the ethnic minorities are a major force in Nigerian politics and nation-building. The principle of respect for ethnic difference obliges the major ethnic groups to consider not only each other but also their smaller neighbours. It is in the space between the major groups that minority cultures are able to prosper. They have exploited the rivalry between the major groups in order to negotiate political alliances to promote their interests. Keeping Nigeria one is of major interest to this group of uncommon ethnicity. They are therefore the strongest supporters of Nigerian unity.

³³Leonard Tivey, *The Nation State: the Formation of Modern Politics*, Oxford, Robertson, 1981, p. 5.

A crucial aspect of the new structural changes for nationalism and nation-building concerns the role of the northern minorities, that is the peoples of the middle belt. These groups who were subjugated and denied identity by the dominant Hausa/Fulani in the old Northern Region have now been freed by the creation of a more pluralistic federation. The uncommon ethnicity of these minorities has found expression in Christianity. The struggle between these minorities and their former Muslim rulers is redrawing cultural boundaries in Nigeria. The final outcome will no doubt have implications for nation-building in Nigeria.

In explaining ethnicity in Nigeria, I adopt both a sociological and a psychological position. I may stress one aspect at the expense of the other, if it is useful to do so. One of the advantages of this approach is that it makes it possible to show the extent to which both perspectives are operative rather than asking which one has more explanatory power. It permits ethnic groups to be treated as partially primordial and partially structural, acknowledging that they can simultaneously adopt solidaristic and exclusionistic strategies of social closure. It sharpens awareness that the processes of collaboration or competition with other groups lead to new identities which may be broader or narrower than the preceding one. Ethnic identities would thus be seen as variable and dynamic, especially in political forms. This approach is useful for probing the links, reciprocity, and exchange systems in the interaction of ethnic groups. It helps to locate those instrumental ties linking members of the various ethnic groups together at many levels. It has the additional advantage of exposing those informal bonds that hold an over-arching system together by exploiting the very conflict that would otherwise be highly explosive. This is illustrated by the increasing conflictual and transformative role of religion in national life in Nigeria.

One of the basic assumptions underlying this study is that conflict is a form of association. It is a consistent and recurrent feature of human grouping. Traditionally, political competition between the constituent Nigerian groups largely took the form of war, with its prize as honour and wealth in slaves or land for hunting, animal husbandry or agriculture. Now, inter-ethnic competition continues within the boundaries of a state which itself claims a legitimate monopoly of the use of physical force. Such competition therefore seldom takes the form of war but rather centres upon competition for state power, the distributive source of honour and wealth. Conflict can be beneficial to nationalism and nation-building. Its resolution can facilitate the tackling of an array of ethnic obstacles to national unity which would otherwise have been ignored. It may therefore help improve conditions for the advance of nation-building projects. For example, the defeat of Biafra in the civil war ensured the supremacy of the federal government. It symbolized triumph for Nigerian state-building process.³⁴ The federal government by projecting the war as a war of national unity, sowed the seeds of a truly Nigerian nationalism with the slogan: 'To Keep Nigeria One Is A Task That Must Be Done'. The mass mobilization of the population for the war effort helped to diffuse an unprecedented sense of belonging and identity with Nigeria. The very task of fighting the war provided the first real national experience which was common to all Nigerians. For the first time, the educated elite and the unlettered masses saw themselves as on a single common historical course.³⁵ The war showed how interwoven the destinies of Nigerians had become over the years, marking the

³⁴ J. Isawa Elaigwu, "The Challenge of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society", in J.A. Atanda and A.Y. Aliyu (eds.), *Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence : Political Development*, (Vol. 1), Zaria, Panel on Nigeria Since Independence History Project, 1985, p. 472.

³⁵ E. A. Ayandele, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society*, Ibadan, University of Ibadan Press, 1974, p. 154.

transformation of the Nigerian state from a 'mechanistic' state to an 'organic' political community.³⁶ Few people would shed their blood for a 'mere geographical expression' to which they had no commitments.³⁷ By demonstrating the pathology of ethnic extremism, the experience of war mitigates the strident imperative of ethnicity.³⁸ Nigeria today is more integrated because of the terrible experience of the War.³⁹

Psychological factors have been emphasized in the causation of ethnic conflict, but seldom have they been advanced or expressed as the fear of domination. Although Kirk Greene proposed the 'Angstkomplex theory' of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, this intuition was not sufficiently developed.⁴⁰ The pervasive significance of fears and anxieties about domination among the Nigerian ethnic groups suggest that analysts ought to be more attentive to the salience, importance and intensity of such fears and anxieties.

The concept of fear explains why ethnic boundaries are flexible. It stresses the historicity of ethnic identity and groups and explains their socialized nature. In doing this it acknowledges interactive variables and symbolic ethnic interests and values. Thus, it demonstrates that group cohesion is somehow instrumental, in other words that cohesion is both a function of emotions and of institutional factors. For instance,

³⁶ Elaigwu, "The Challenge of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society", op. cit., p. 472.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 472.

³⁸ Anthony Kirk-Greene and Douglas Rimmer, *Nigeria Since 1970: a Political and Economic Outline*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981, p. 3.

³⁹ Dov Ronen, "Alternative Patterns of Integration in African States", *JMAS*, 14, 4, 1976, p. 586.

⁴⁰ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Genesis of the Nigerian Civil War and the Theory of Fear", *Research Report No. 27*, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1975, passim.

group integration decreases during a crisis when there is no available solution and increases if a likely cooperative solution is present.⁴¹ Thus, the consciousness of being different in relation to the wider society is of fundamental strategic importance to the consciousness of belonging. It thus synthesizes the instrumentalist and the primordialist perspectives on ethnicity, reducing the need to choose between the two polar models, a tendency which has damaged the proper understanding of ethnicity.

The role of fear in ethnicity makes it difficult, if not impossible for political engineering to produce predictable results. However, it also suggests that in those areas of social life where fear is blunted positive consequences for integration can be expected.

Critics have disputed the utility and validity of nation-building because of the persistence of ethnicity. Some critics have even given the impression that nation-building entails nothing but the destruction of distinctive ethnic cultures.⁴² To see nation-building solely in terms of its benefits as do the theorists of nation-building, or solely in terms of its sacrifices, as do many of their critics is to misunderstand the processes of nation-state formation.

Nation-building is a complex and difficult process. It involves social, cultural, political and economic sacrifices and benefits to the individuals and communities that constitute the state. The relative balance of these sacrifices and benefits varies or depends on circumstances, which may be objectively or subjectively defined, externally

⁴¹ Hamblin, "Group Integration during a Crisis", in *Human Relations*, 9, 1958, pp. 67-76, cited in John M.G. van der Dennen, "Ethnocentrism and In-group/Out-group Differentiation: a review and Interpretation of the Literature", in Vernon Reynolds et al. (eds.), *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 35.

⁴² See for example, Walker Connor, "Nation-building or Nation-Destroying?", *op. cit.*

or internally induced, and which may be redefined by the affected individuals, sub-groups and groups, at any given time. National identification and what it is believed to imply, is thus flexible, changing and shifting in time, even in the course of quite short periods. This approach has the advantage of enabling issues like nations and nationalism to be discussed in terms of new and contextually meaningful models rather than obsolete ones. For example, it is useful for understanding the resurgence of ethnicity in western industrialized nation-states like Britain and the US. It rejects the idea that ethnic pluralism ceases to be relevant in modern industrialized nation-states or that nationalism and nation-state-building are delimited by industrialization and modernization as Gellner's theory of nationalism implies.⁴³ According to him, industrialization would obliterate deep social abysses which could be activated by ethnicity, and the old plethora of folk cultures are unlikely to survive except in a token and cellophane-packaged form.⁴⁴

In this study, the nation is approached as a dual phenomenon. It is essentially constructed from above by the state, but it cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs and interests of the individuals and communities that constitute the state.⁴⁵ The preoccupation of both modernization and post-modernization theories of nation-building with the perspective of nation-building from above makes it difficult to pay adequate attention to the view from below. That view tells us more about how individuals and communities manage

⁴³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, op. cit.. See also *Thought and Change*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964.

⁴⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, CUP, 1990, p. 10.

to maintain themselves within an ethnically-divided society, demonstrating the links, exchange and cooperation that goes on between ethnicity and nationalism in the process of nation-building. The descending approach tends to be more concerned with the survival of the state and those near to it. Consequently, it emphasizes privileged interests and the negative aspects of ethnicity in national life as ethnic elites use ethnic identities to struggle for the possession of state power. The complete picture of the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism in the nation-building process therefore requires that analysts pay attention to both official and popular views.

Ethnicity is not regarded as inimical to nationalism and nation-building in this study. The salience of ethnicity as a dynamic of societal behaviour in Nigeria lies in the opportunistic and socialised nature of ethnic identities. Contemporary Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Ibibio or Hausa identities are historically modern identities, the product of the emergence, first of the colonial state and then of independent Nigeria. This development is significant for nation-building in Nigeria. Until the imposition of the colonial state on the groups, only the sub-groups constituted meaningful socio-political units. Identity or similarity of language and culture did not necessarily result in common political action.⁴⁶ In that setting, it did not make sense to speak of Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio, Igbo, Tiv. It made far more sense to speak of Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Awka, Onitsha, Afikpo, Ife, Ijebu, Ondo, Oyo, that is in terms of groups that regarded themselves as socio-political units.⁴⁷ The growth of the groups to their present shape and size involved a degree of fusion of formerly separate ethnic and

⁴⁶ Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation-state*, Ibadan, Impact Publishers, for the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1985, p. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

particularistic interests. It is, therefore, assumed in this study that non-ethnic allegiances or interests may now, and more so in future, intersect contemporary ethnic ties in Nigeria. If and when that happens, it would contribute to the process whereby ethnic ties adjust to other circumstances. This is presently happening with Christian and Muslim identities increasingly becoming more important in Nigerian politics.

CHAPTER TWO

NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES IN NIGERIA

Introduction

In this chapter, I shall elaborate on the form of 'nation-state' and of nationalist ideology which have developed in Nigeria. I shall, firstly, examine the growth and development of Nigerian nationalism with particular regard to the interaction of colonialism, nationalist politics and the military. I shall then discuss the official nationalist ideology, 'Ramatism', a more or less coherent set of beliefs and doctrines communicated by the government to the citizenry. The term Ramatism is derived from General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, the leader of the first Nigerian government to adopt an explicit nationalist ideology. Although Ramatism did not survive the demise of Mohammed's ephemeral regime, the principal doctrines of this populist ideology have been retained and elaborated under subsequent regimes. I argue that this continuing de facto ideology motivates and legitimates official promotion of a popular nationalism since the 1970s.

After discussing the form and content of nationalist ideologies, I shall look at the national images and the actions prescribed in order to achieve these models.

NIGERIAN NATIONALISM: BACKGROUND

Nigerian nationalism developed as an unintended result of British imperial policy. The British had not counted on the fact that the very creation of a new political entity made it almost inevitable that some of the inhabitants of the new unit would identify with it. As James Coleman puts it, Nigerian nationalism was as much a

fulfilment as a failure of British policy.¹ Nigeria meant for the colonial administration a collection of 'nations', ruled by a government directed from abroad.² The general intention of colonial policy was to promote ethnic distinctiveness. However, its implementation tended to promote Nigerian unity. For example, indirect rule was meant to preserve group consciousness, but the relatively unified administration fostered a new consciousness of being Nigerian. By opening up Nigeria to forces of modernization - literacy, monetary economy, common English language, modern legal and bureaucratic systems - colonialism helped to create a new class of Nigerians with links both in the traditional society and the wider world. This class of educated Nigerians became the recipients and transmitters of European nationalist ideas which they used to challenge the established colonial order and to create national communities within colonial Nigeria.

A major catalyst for Nigerian nationalism was the First World War. The mixing of diverse ethnic peoples in the army helped to break down ethnic barriers and replace them with bonds of friendship. It brought about a change in the perception of the white race as a monolithic and superior race. Nigerians witnessed at first hand Europeans fighting amongst themselves. They saw that white people were no less vulnerable than other men and finally understood what it meant to be colonized.³ Soon after the war, African professionals, most of them in Lagos, began actively to demand a representative legislature. The First National Congress of British West Africa held in

¹ James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1971 edition, p. 64.

² Okoi Arikpo, *The Development Of Modern Nigeria*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967, p. 40.

³ James K. Matthews, "World War 1 and the Rise of African Nationalism: Nigerian Veterans as Catalysts of Change", *JMAS*, 20, 3, 1982, p. 501.

Accra in 1920 championed the cause. The delegates demanded, among many things, a representative legislature, the abolition of racial discrimination in civil service appointments, and the establishment of a British West African University to promote African nationalism among students.⁴ These demands were bitterly criticised by the Governor, Sir Clifford, who saw it as absurd that Nigeria could be represented by a few 'men born and bred in British-administered towns situated on the sea-shore, who in the safety of British protection, have peacefully pursued their studies under British teachers in British schools in order to enable them to become ministers of religion or learned in the laws of England.'⁵ Two years later the government conceded to the demands for an elective legislative council. The council was established in 1923. Two political parties were formed in Lagos to contest the elections. Most of their members were doctors, lawyers and prosperous businessmen from the leading Lagos families. They neither sought nor received popular support. Consequently, the tide of nationalism dwindled.

Declining economic prosperity rekindled nationalism. In 1937 European produce trading firms formed the West African Cocoa Pool in order to fix the price of cocoa. African cocoa middlemen reacted with hostility and boycotted the European firms involved. They sent a delegation to London to demand government protection of African commercial interests from the monopoly organization. The Nigerian Youth Movement formed in Lagos in 1934 led the agitation against the monopoly. The movement began as a campaign against the establishment of the Higher College, Yaba, which was intended to train people locally to meet the intermediate manpower

⁴ Arikpo, *The Development of Modern Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 56-7

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

needs of the public service. Professional elites in Lagos saw the college as a threat and protested forcefully against what they felt was 'the local production of "half-baked" professional men to compete with them'.⁶ Artisans, clerical workers and non-graduate teachers joined in the protest because they believed that the new class of public servants trained at Yaba threatened their prospects of advancement in the service. Many Yaba graduates joined the movement in protest against the Yaba diploma which, in spite of its high professional standard, condemned its holder to an inferior status. The movement was to later transform into a political party to fight against imperialism, racism and economic exploitation. Unlike its two predecessors, the movement had widespread support, particularly in southern Nigeria. Its leaders were educated elites most of whom had imbibed the idea of nationalism from Europe and America where they were trained. The movement was sustained by the development of an indigenous newspaper industry. The *West African Pilot* was established in 1937 in Lagos by Nnamdi Azikiwe and the *Daily Service* was established in 1938 by the National Youth Movement. Both newspapers daily preached against colonialism and urged the Nigerian youth to become politically conscious and active so as to get rid of imperialism.

Nationalist activity was temporarily ceased when the Second World War started in 1939. The newspapers and nationalist leaders supported the British war efforts and urged young Nigerians to enlist in the army. Nigeria itself served as a military base for thousands of European and American service men *en route* to the Middle East. This involvement in the war helped to create a commonality of experience that eroded traditional power and values. It gave Nigerians access to the publications of the Army

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

Bureau of Current Affairs and the Fabian Society all of which extolled the virtues of parliamentary democracy and the principle of self-determination.⁷ The turning point for the nationalist movement was the Atlantic Charter declaration by President Roosevelt and Mr. Winston Churchill in August 1942. The Deputy Prime Minister of Britain, Clement Attlee, declared at a conference organized by the West African Students' Union in London that Africans had as much right as any other nation on earth to the benefits of the Charter. The conference adopted a resolution demanding self-government for West Africa. Nigerian nationalism moved from being a protest movement against racial contempt and economic exploitation to a struggle for political independence. This struggle was based on the concept of national self-determination, that is the right to political self-expression for ethnic groups, an idea popularised by European and American nationalists.

Educated youths in Lagos formed various study groups to prepare for self-government. Their activities led to the inauguration of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in August 1944 to coordinate the agitation for self-government. By 1945, over forty organizations had joined the Council. These included a wide variety of interest groups - political, literary, religious, tribal, commercial, occupational, social, and women's organizations. The inclusion of tribal organizations meant that ethnicity was used to reinforce nationalism. However, it was to become the bane of the Council as it introduced populist elements into the organization. Personal rivalry and bitterness between council leaders of different ethnic groups (who increasingly appealed for the support of their groups), intensified the growing ethnic consciousness in the country and weakened the effectiveness of the council as a front

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

for Nigerian nationalism.

The NCNC became a political party in 1947. However, the solid support which it enjoyed from the Igbo Federal Union, and Nnamdi Azikiwe's leadership (after the death of Herbert Macaulay) were eventually to reduce it to a predominantly Igbo party. This became more valid after the party assumed power in the Eastern Region. The Action Group (AG) which was launched in 1951 by Chief Awolowo later became the governing party in the Western Region. The last major political party to be launched was the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) which established hegemony in the Northern Region. It was founded by educated northern youths in the service of the government and the native authorities. Its support was largely from the Hausa/Fulani, many of whom were from privileged families in the north. Almost all of them had come into contact with nationalist ideas from the Nigerian south and from abroad. Both the AG and the NPC were originally tribal unions before they reorganized as political parties. The AG was the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (the children of Oduduwa), a Yoruba cultural organization named after the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba-speaking peoples. The NPC was the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (organization of Northern People), which was founded initially to combat ignorance, idleness and injustice. Despite the NPC's motto, 'One North, One People, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe', the party derived its support mainly from the major ethnic and Islamic groups in the region, that is the Kanuri and the Hausa/Fulani rather than from ethnic minority groups. The affiliation of the three leading parties to the three major ethnic groups meant that competition between them was intense. The situation worsened towards the end of colonial rule. However, mutual resentment of British racism and arrogance proved a sufficient binding force for the success of the nationalist movement.

Independence was achieved in October 1960. Post-independence politics exposed the conflicting interests of the diverse ethnic elites. However, increasing animosities were mediated by inter-ethnic collaboration. These alliances alternated according to changing circumstances. For example, the Hausa/Fulani-controlled NPC joined with the Igbo-controlled NCNC to form the federal government, relegating the Yoruba AG to the opposition. In the Western Region the NCNC joined with the United Peoples Party (UPP), a dissident AG group, to form a coalition government. By 1963 the NPC/NCNC accord became strained. The NPC sought a new alliance with the Yoruba UPP, supporting its leader, Chief Akintola, against Chief Awolowo. This led to the split between the UPP and the AG. Akintola reciprocated by supporting the NPC in the census controversy. NCNC supporters in the western parliament decamped and joined Akintola to form the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). Opposition parties in the Northern Region, principally the Nigerian Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) (an ally of the NCNC) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) (an ally of the AG) combined to form the Northern Progressive Front (NPF). The NPC formed a formal alliance with the Akintola-led NNDP to contest the 1964 elections. They were joined by two ethnic minority parties from the south, the Mid-Western Democratic Front and the Niger Delta Congress of Eastern Nigeria. This alliance was known as the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). Soon after, the NCNC, the AG and the NPF joined together to form the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). This set the stage for a two-party political battle based on the competing ideologies of ethno-regionalism and nationalism, UPGA for nationalism and NNA for ethno-regionalism.

The 1964 elections almost disintegrated Nigeria. The Northern Region threatened to secede. The Eastern Region also threatened to secede. The groups saw

each other as obstacles to the realization of their immediate goal which was the domination of the centre. What saved Nigeria was the 'closed door' agreements made by the regional leaders. Sir Tafawa Balewa remained as Prime Minister. This minimized northern fears of southern domination, which was the most critical element in the 1964 election crisis. If Sir Balewa was replaced by a southerner, northerners, in particular the Hausa/Fulani, would have construed it as a loss of power. Loyalty to a state ruled by a member other than the Hausa/Fulani was not tolerable.

Nigeria, thus, represented a less concrete concept than the ethnic groups. Loyalties were embedded in the various regions and the capture of the centre meant the transfer of these loyalties to central government and conversely, the withdrawal of support by the other regions.⁸ Thus there could not be a public interest other than the interest of a particular ethnic group or groups. The 'national game' was not a competition for more political influence but a means to dominate other groups.⁹

The violent overthrow of the politicians by the military in January 1966 destroyed the illusion of a Nigerian nationalism created by the success of anti-colonial nationalism. The revenge coup by northern soldiers and the massacre of the Igbo in the north laid the foundation for secession as the solution to the challenge of ethnic pluralism. The massacre particularly stimulated Igbo nationalism.

The threat of secession helped to crystallize the various conflicting interests within the regions. It shattered the illusion promoted by the dominant ethnic groups that the regions were monolithic groups, exposing the centrifugal tendencies within the regions between the majority and the minority groups. Faced with the imminent

⁸ Dov Ronen, "Alternative Patterns of Integration in African States", *JMAS*, 14, 4, 1976, p. 584.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 584.

secession of the Eastern Region, General Gowon, dismantled the three-regional federal system and divided Nigeria into twelve States. The immediate beneficiaries were ethnic minorities who eagerly supported him against the secessionists. The stunt helped to eliminate northern fears of an alliance between the Western and Eastern Regions. The way was paved for the rest of Nigeria to unite against the secessionists.

War was inevitable. The forces of Nigerian unity and those of secessionist Eastern Region, renamed Biafra, were rigidly opposed. The issue of disintegration and unity were settled on the battlefield in a thirty-month long war. In January 1970, the secessionists capitulated and declared loyalty to Nigeria. War had enforced Nigerian nationalism.

Power has been held primarily by soldiers since the end of the war, except for the brief period of civilian rule under President Shagari. Every military government since the war has claimed that the ideological foundation for their rule is nationalism. They have all pursued nation-building policies which involve an elaborate nationalist justification and an attack on popular identities and loyalties which are believed to oppose national commitment. This official promotion of nationalism has been greatly influenced by 'Ramatism' ideology.

RAMATISM

General Murtala Ramat Mohammed was the first leader of Nigeria to adopt a populist style. When he came to power in 1975 after ousting the Gowon regime, he embarked on measures which generated immediate and popular enthusiasm for his government. He replaced the much hated state governors. He cancelled the contentious 1973 census. He purged the bureaucracy on a scale virtually unknown in

Africa. The purge which came to be known variously as 'Operation Deadwoods', 'Operation Clean the Nation' or just 'The Purge', was country-wide and affected every government sector.¹⁰ It is estimated that over ten thousand public servants were either retired or dismissed, the overwhelming majority of whom were bureaucrats. The shock effect on the bureaucracy was staggering and 'proved to be exactly what the new broom administration had intended'.¹¹ Before then, it was unknown for people in high positions to be dismissed for corruption: at worst they were transferred. Although the bureaucracy was made a convenient scapegoat for the corrupt practices of a military regime that was controlled by both bureaucratic and military elites, Murtala was clearly reflecting the opinions of Nigerians in general by emphasizing the eradication of corruption as the most important aspect of his regime.

He used populist foreign policy to promote the image of Nigeria abroad. He presented the country as neither neutral nor non-aligned but independent.¹² Nigeria under him emerged as a continental power in Africa, adopting a highly visible and activist policy with regard to the liberation of South Africa. Angolan independence more than any other factor provided the General the opportunity to develop Nigeria's leadership role in African affairs. It also helped to establish the regime's legitimacy. Nigeria's initial policy on Angola had sought to encourage the three leading groups - MPLA, FLNA and UNITA - to work together for the benefit of the people of Angola and for national unity. The government was prepared to support some delay in the

¹⁰ Anthony Kirk-Greene and Douglas Rimmer, *Nigeria since 1970: a Political and Economic Outline*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981, p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹² Billy Dudley, *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics* London, Macmillan, 1982, p. 298.

transfer of power from Portugal to the Angolans in order to achieve its goals. When independence was officially declared on 11 November 1975 Nigeria, following its policy of neutrality, refused to recognize any of the groups competing for control of the new state. However, on 25 November Nigeria in a dramatic change of policy announced her recognition of the MPLA as truly representative of the interests of the people of Angola. The official explanation for the radical change in policy was attributed to South Africa's intervention in Angola. However, the ultimate stimulus for the decision was pressure from the Nigerian public on government to recognize the MPLA. The decision to recognize the MPLA was also consistent with government efforts to assume the leading role in African affairs. Zaire, which also entertained this aspiration, campaigned vigorously for the recognition of the allied FILA/UNITA (and FLEA) forces.

The change of policy on Angola was also a reaction against what was seen as an imperialist attempt by the US to teleguide Nigeria's policy. The new policy towards Angola was radically opposed to that of the USA. The Ford administration launched a diplomatic offensive in Africa to persuade Nigeria and other African states that had recognized the MPLA to change their policy and support the joint FILA and UNITA command. General Mohammed responded in anger to President Ford's letter urging Nigeria to change policy. He made public his angry response which accused the United States of 'arm-twisting' and 'insulting the intelligence of African nations and the dignity of the black man'.¹³ The government took over the United States Information Service (USIS) building in Kaduna and the radio monitoring centre in Lagos. These dramatic developments in the relationship of both governments generated a high

¹³ Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, News Release No. 16; and *Hearings: Sub-Committee on African Affairs*, March and May 1976, p. 171, cited in Bassey Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence: the Development of Nigerian U.S. Relations, 1960-1984*, London, Westview Press, 1987, p. 194.

degree of popular nationalism. The public, particularly students, took to the street to demonstrate their support for Nigeria. The most populist manifestation of the regime's Angolan policy was the display at a press conference of two white South African soldiers captured in Angola. They were brought to Nigeria by the Prime Minister of the MPLA government. Also strategic for nationalist sentiment was the gift of the sum of 13.5 million naira (approximately 20 million dollars) to Angola. This was publicly presented to the visiting Prime Minister.¹⁴

The General attempted to discredit the notions of 'tribe' and ethnicity inside Nigeria. He saw such sentiments as serving illegitimate factional interests that are damaging to Nigeria. He warned:

Sectional and selfish interests cannot serve the new and expansive patterns of society we aim to build nor can they serve to buttress our steadfast desire for modernization. Successful social re-organization ... of our Nation, built on solid foundations can uplift our country and all its people. The achievement of this goal will require the commitment of every Nigerian.¹⁵

He conceptualized the ethnic problem as that of unbalanced opportunities among the various ethnic groups. For him ethnicity is the effect of unequal opportunities between various sections, that is between the north and south, between the three major groups,

¹⁴ *West Africa*, London, 12 January, 1976, p. 90. A mystery surrounds this 20 million dollar gift. According to a report by Uzor Maxim Uzoatu entitled "Battle of the Titans", in *This Week*, Lagos, April 16, 1990, when the Angolans came to collect the money, it was discovered that the money had been paid into an account said to belong to a retired Nigerian Army Brigadier. The officer gave some weapons to the Angolans instead of cash.

¹⁵ Speech by the Head of State, General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, on the Occasion of the Festival of *Eid-il-Fitr*, October 6, 1975.

between the numerous minorities and the three majority groups, and between Christians and Moslems. His government accordingly initiated a policy of proportional representation for ethnic and religious groups. The membership of the ruling Supreme Military Council (SMC) was carefully chosen to avoid ethnic and religious bias.

He showed concern for social issues. To fight inflation he flooded the market with scarce essential food items like salt, milk, sugar, and meat, which was popularly nicknamed 'Murtala meat'. He set up a commission to look into the abandoned property issue which had made the Igbos feel alienated after the war. He started new health projects and reformed the judiciary. He set up panels to probe alleged corrupt practices by public officials. His concern for corruption led him to establish the Public Complaints Commission at both federal and State levels, and to mandate the Constitution Drafting Committee to provide for public accountability in the new constitution. The attack on corruption was part of a general emphasis on the ordinary man as against the 'big man'. His regime thus acquired a favourable reputation as a poor man's government.¹⁶

Under Mohammed, Nigerians felt their country had been given a new lease of life. They had regained their sense of direction and they yearned to sustain it through the widespread demands for a national ideology which would point the way forward for all to follow. The concept of Ramatism was introduced and spread by a proliferation of photographs, songs and gramophone records about the General's dazzling leadership.¹⁷ His popularity was overpowering.

¹⁶ Martin Dent, "Corrective Government: Military Rule in Perspective", in Keith Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria*, London, Frank Cass, 1978, p. 118.

¹⁷ Kirk-Greene and Rimmer, *Nigeria Since 1970: a Political and Economic Outline*, op. cit., p. 14.

The assassination of Mohammed in an abortive coup shocked Nigerians. It was, nevertheless, auspicious for nationalism for it acquired a hero and a martyr to set the seal on its ideals. For once, there was one leader almost all Nigerians identified with. He bequeathed Nigeria with a sense of itself as a national and political entity. Popular anger against his assassins led to the coup plotters being rounded up and either executed or imprisoned. The ousted Nigerian leader, General Gowon, the architect of the new Nigerian unity, was stripped of his military rank and benefits, and declared a wanted person. Colonel Dimka, the coup leader, had claimed that the coup was to reinstate Gowon and the dismissed state governors. Before his disgrace, Gowon had been granted his full pension and was being supported in the UK by the government in recognition of his war effort to keep Nigeria one. Nationalists saw the assassination as an imperialist attempt to de-stabilize the country. The refusal of Britain to hand over Gowon to the Nigerian authorities for prosecution deepened the anti-imperialist feeling and led to a diplomatic rift with Britain.

Murtala Mohammed's ten month rule is looked back upon as the period in which Nigeria began to find its identity. Like de Gaulle, Peron, and Nasser, Mohammed asserted the independence of a middle-range, regional power, inspiring its population with a sense of national dignity, importance and pride. Like them, he provided strong, decisive and charismatic leadership, and set a high standard of governmental responsibility. Also like them, Mohammed gave his name to a diffuse but popular and emotive ideology, a populist nationalism capable of inspiring and mobilizing those who had hitherto been apathetic and divided. Unlike de Gaulle, Peron, and Nasser, however, Mohammed did not lead a country with a strong historical sense of its national identity. Mohammed died a victim of the ethnic rivalries he tried so hard to

overcome. The majority of those arrested for the coup were from Gowon's region of the country. It was a revenge coup.

However, his vision and populist style have been claimed by his successors. For instance, his immediate successor, General Obasanjo used the occasion of the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid hosted by Nigeria in 1977 to enhance his own administration's image and to boost mass nationalism. Addressing the conference, Obasanjo warned multinational corporations against aiding and abetting apartheid, ordering them to choose between Nigeria and South Africa.¹⁸ He proceeded to nationalize Shell-BP (Nigeria) and Barclays Bank (Nigeria) for their association with South Africa. The Shagari regime in 1983 cashed in on existing public antagonism against aliens to legitimize its rule. It suddenly announced the expulsion of what it termed illegal aliens, giving them 14 days notice to leave Nigeria. Illegal immigrants were held responsible for Nigeria's social problems. They were particularly blamed for the violent religious unrest in the northern cities of Kano, Maiduguri and Kaduna.¹⁹ Although the expulsion issued directly from the requirement of *real politik*, it was wholly consistent with Ramatist nationalist ideology in differentiating between Nigerians and non-Nigerians and their interests. In 1985, the Buhari regime, which claimed to be an extension of the Mohammed regime, also expelled aliens, using their expulsion to prop up his regime against public disillusion and disappointment. The same regime was accused by Britain of masterminding the attempted kidnap of Umaru Dikko, a former top aide in the Shagari administration, in a crate from London. He

¹⁸ Address by General Obasanjo, at the opening of the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid, August 22-26, 1977, Lagos, in *A March of Progress: Collected Speeches of His Excellency, General Obasanjo*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, pp. 176-180.

¹⁹ *West Africa*, London, 31 January 1983, p. 245.

was wanted in Nigeria to face charges of political corruption. Although the bungling of the kidnap affair may have dented Nigeria's image abroad, it fanned mass nationalism. By the kidnap attempt, the government was pandering to public pressure to deal harshly with corrupt politicians.

Ramatism - like Gaullism, Peronism, and Nasserism - is open to a wide range of interpretations and uses. It does not belong exclusively to either the right or the left, and it has no sacred texts or privileged interpreters. Its essential doctrines are: that the divisions between Nigerians and non-Nigerians are more significant than those factors - such as class, status or, most importantly, ethnicity - which divide Nigerians from each other; that the supreme purpose of government is the welfare of all Nigerians irrespective of class, religion or ethnicity; that governmental promises are meant to be fulfilled, time schedules to be kept, decisions to be implemented; that the government must be responsible for eliminating corruption throughout the state apparatus; and that the government must vigorously pursue an independent foreign policy.

Unlike Gaullism and Peronism, Ramatism does not inform the programme of any particular political party, although it does inform that of the Nigerian Council for National Awareness (NCNA). The NCNA is a civil association which came into being after the death of the General. Its principal objective is to promote the nationalist ideas of General Murtala Mohammed. It commemorates Mohammed each year on the anniversary of his assassination, and acts as a constant critic of government, chastising it whenever it fails to adhere to his standards or principles. The Association believes that Murtala Ramat Muhammad is to Nigeria what Garibaldi is to Italy, Napoleon to France, Ghandi to India, Castro to Cuba, Nasser to Egypt, Mao to China,

and Atatuk to Turkey.²⁰

Perhaps partially because of Mohammed's early death in office, the ideology has retained its identity with government, especially military government. It has also informed subsequent Nigerian Constitutions. Despite its official and, therefore, necessarily pragmatic character, Ramatism deserves description as an ideology, and it has, by Nigerian standards, been a peculiarly effective one. Nevertheless, it must be said that the wave of nationalist feelings that attend measures issuing from a populist based nationalist ideology like Ramatism are temporary, often reminiscent of football stadium nationalism. The assassination of Mohammed in a sectional coup exposes the fragility of populism as a base for nationalism. It suggests that the rallying cry of nationalism needs constantly to be supplemented by an appeal for the steady support of those who see in the state the means of securing their own ends.²¹

HOW NIGERIA IS IMAGINED

Nigeria is imagined as a great and modern black nation. It is also imagined as a disciplined, fair, just and humane African society. These images of Nigeria were painted by General Obasanjo in what is now known as the Jaji Declaration.²² The Shagari administration articulated the same images in its Ethical Revolution programme while President Babangida elaborated them in a charter entitled the

²⁰ *Building a Brand New Nigeria*, pamphlet produced by the NCNA, Lagos, for the 11th anniversary celebration of the death of General Mohammed, 1987, p. 5.

²¹ Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil*, op. cit., p. 6.

²² Speech by His Excellency, General Olusegun Obasanjo, at the Opening of the Command and Staff College, Jaji, on Monday, September 12, 1977, pp. 5, 12, 13.

National Orientation Movement (NOM).²³ The charter established the commitment of Nigerians as a nation:

- (a) to restore and sustain discipline in our national life;
- (b) to inculcate the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in all Nigerians;
- (c) to restore respect for our culture and encourage its development;
- (d) to instil in the populace a sense of absolute loyalty to the fatherland;
- (e) to ensure and uphold leadership by example;
- (f) to foster respect for constituted authority;
- (g) to revamp the economy through hard work, and the intensification of agriculture so as to ensure self-sufficiency in food production.²⁴

Indiscipline is consistently identified by Nigerian governments as a major problem affecting the country. It is manifested in corruption, dishonesty, opportunism, lack of patriotism, and commitment to Nigeria and it pervades all aspects of national life.²⁵ Its magnitude is vividly portrayed by ex-Biafran leader, Odumegwu-Ojukwu, who argues that the bane of Nigerian society is the obsession of her citizenry with the acquisition of privilege:

We profane tradition to acquire titles; we buy degrees, we join exclusive and sometimes secret societies...Our vehicles carry exclusive numbers.

²³ Address by President Ibrahim Babangida, at the Launching of Mass Mobilization Campaign at National Stadium Surulere, Lagos on Saturday, 25th July, 1987, pp. 3-8.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁵ General Obasanjo at Jaji, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-10.

Each group, because of its exclusive nature, negates our social unity and distorts our national cohesion. The Nigerian of today is an addict of privilege. ...The Nigerian must wear the most expensive clothes, drive the most expensive cars, build the most expensive palaces, patronize the most expensive clubs, send their children to the most expensive school, drink the most expensive beverages, throw the most lavish parties and mate the most mercenary mistresses. The objective is to be recognized. The greater the assault on the eyes of the under privileged, the greater the satisfaction.²⁶

Indiscipline is seen as a result of the negation of traditional African culture.²⁷ Consequently, traditional African values will provide the cultural context for the nation-state under construction. These values include the norm that everybody is his brother's keeper, respect for age, experience and authority, ostracizing evil doers and the indolent and extolling of virtues and values based on service to the community, and the encouragement of excellence.²⁸

Unity is the most widely pronounced ideal of Nigeria. The Nation's motto is 'Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress'. The Nigerian national flag is divided into three equal parts. The central part which is white symbolizes unity and peace. The national

²⁶ Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I am Involved*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited, 1989, p. XV.

²⁷ General Obasanjo at Jaji, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

anthem emphasizes unity with the myth of common ancestral father.²⁹ The old anthem was rejected because it was seen as emphasizing the elements that divide rather than those that unite the country. The search for unity has been a central theme in Nigeria's development. The various constitutions of the country maintain it as their central objective. The 1979 constitution was devoted to it. Millions of Nigerian men, women and children died between 1967 and 1970 in a war to defend Nigeria's unity. The slogan of the Federal side during the war was 'To keep Nigeria One Is a Task That Must Be Done!'. Even the name of the head of state at the time of the war, Yakubu Gowon, became an acronym for "You Are Keeping Us Better United" and "Go On With One Nigeria".

The pursuit of unity stems from the belief that it is only when Nigeria is united, in an atmosphere of peace and political stability, that the social and economic advancement all Nigerians yearn for can be attained. For instance, Odumegwu-Ojukwu claims that:

Nigeria cannot make progress without unity. Nigeria cannot fulfil her mission to all her peoples without unity. Nigeria cannot aid effectively her African brothers and sisters without unity, neither can she hope to re-establish the black personality in all its glory, a personality to be respected by all humanity and recognized fully as an integral, free and equal part of the human race, without unity.³⁰

²⁹ First verse of the Nigerian national anthem. See appendix for Nigeria's old and new national anthems.

³⁰ Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I am Involved*, op. cit., p. 55.

Nigeria as imagined was rationalized in the 1979 constitution.³¹ Its provisions for nation-building reflect the fundamental nationalist aspirations of Ramatist ideology. Addressing the inaugural meeting of the CDC, General Mohammed directed that the new Constitution should unequivocally be committed to a federal system, eliminate 'cut-throat political competition based on a system of winner-takes-all' as was characteristic of the First Republic, de-emphasize institutionalized opposition to government in power and encourage the development of consensus politics and government based on community interests, decentralize power and eliminate the over-concentration of power in a few hands, provide for a free fair electoral system to ensure adequate representation at the centre, restrict the number of new States to be created, depoliticize the census, and encourage the formation of genuine and truly national political parties.³² He recommended the establishment of an executive presidential system in which the president and the vice president would be elected and granted clearly defined powers. Their election into office as well as their cabinet was to 'reflect the federal character of the country'. His idea was that the Constitution should enable the effectual conversion of Nigeria from statehood to nationhood, with the elimination of ethnicity in its iniquitous ramifications and the sustenance of constitutionalism.³³

In the preamble to the Constitution the people of Nigeria are held to pledge

³¹ The Constitution was revised in 1989.

³² Address by General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, at the Inaugural Meeting of the CDC at the Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, October 18, 1975.

³³ N.B. Graham-Douglas, "Fundamental National Objectives and Sustenance of Nigerian Constitutionalism", in J.A. Atanda and A.Y. Aliyu (eds.), *Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence, Zaria, March 1983, Vol.1, Political Development*, Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project, 1985, p. 331.

firmly and solemnly:

To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God dedicated to the promotion of inter African solidarity, world peace, international cooperation and understanding; And to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principle of Freedom, Equality and Justice and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people.

According to the Constitution, the national ethic is discipline, self-reliance and patriotism.³⁴ It enjoins the federal government to actively promote national integration and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association. For this purpose, the state is to provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation; secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation; encourage intermarriage among persons from different places of origin or different religious, ethnic or linguistic associations or ties; promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers; foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties; and abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power.

Imbalance between the federal centre and the periphery has often brought tragic results in Nigeria. During the First Republic, the Regions had so much power

³⁴ See section on social objectives.

that the centre was weak to the point of immobilization. When General Ironsi attempted to centralize political power through his unification decree in 1966 violent resistance and civil war resulted. In order to avoid the sad mistakes of the past, the Constitution provides for correcting any imbalances in the federation by enumerating in section 8 the procedures for the creation of more states. The federation now comprises three tiers of government: a single government at the centre, several separate State governments and local government councils in prescribed local government areas of a State. The powers of the central government is now greatly enhanced in relation to that of States. In any conflict between a State and the federal government, the latter will by Constitution prevail.

The Constitution provides for proportional rewards for the ethnic groups. Section 14, subsection 3, provides for 'ethnic arithmetic' to be adopted in appointments to all state institutions. This is referred to as 'federal character'. According to the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), federal character is 'the distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria'.³⁵ It was especially meant to reassure groups about their various fears - fear of domination by the Hausa/Fulani, fear of domination by the North, fear of domination by the ethnic majority groups, fear of domination within States, Northern fear of Southern domination by skills, Christian fear of domination by Muslims, and Muslim fear of domination by Christians. Article 14 (sections 3 & 4) further provides that the composition of the

³⁵ CDC Report, vol. 11, Lagos, Government Printer, p. 67.

Government of the Federation, or any of its agencies, should reflect the federal character of Nigeria by ensuring that persons from a few States do not predominate. Sub-section 4 similarly enjoins State and local governments and their agencies to ensure that they are not predominantly staffed by members of any one ethnic, sectional or regional group to the exclusion of others. Article 135 (section 2) enjoins the President to include in his cabinet at least one minister from each of the constituent States of Nigeria. The army, civil service and other national agencies are required to reflect this notional federal character in their recruitment and appointments.

Determined to avoid a recurrence of the ethnic politics that produced the civil war, the framers of the Constitution attempted a far reaching reconstruction of the political system. Political parties were required to be pan-Nigerian. The Constitution emphasized the duty of the state to promote the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers. Article 202 and 203 required that political parties organize throughout the federation as well as reflect the 'federal character' in the appointment of their officers. Membership must be open to every citizen irrespective of place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping. Each registered party must have its headquarters in the federal capital. The Electoral Commission is empowered to grant recognition only to parties represented in at least two thirds of the States. The use of primordial symbols by parties is prohibited. The revised edition of the Constitution provides for a two party system of government, one to the left and the other to the right. This provision coincides with the decision by the incumbent leadership to register only two political parties for the Third Republic scheduled for 1992.

The Constitution provides for a presidential system of government. It was

expected that a powerful and democratically elected president would provide effective government and become the focus of national unity. The enhanced powers of the President would facilitate development, national integration and stability as well as contributing to national identity. To avoid leadership emerging from a parochial base or from a single geo-ethnic region, articles 125 and 126 provided that the President must be elected, not merely by a simple majority of the population, but by an absolute majority with at least one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the States. A run-off follows if no candidate achieves this. These provisions were intended to impose additional pressures towards cross-cutting cleavages. In opting for the presidential system, Nigerian nation-builders reject the consociational option of a grand coalition of ethnic power elites and underscore their objective of unity. The objective of nation-building is to break down ethnic barriers, not to maintain them. The adoption of the executive presidential model of government is symbolic of the new image of Nigeria as free from the vestiges of colonialism. The system is seen as a modern and indigenous Nigerian development, in contrast to the Westminster parliamentary model which was rejected as a symbol of the colonial past.

The idea of unity-in-diversity underscores the Constitution. This idea recognizes that substantial ethnic and cultural differences have to be acknowledged in order to achieve the hopes of Nigerians for a stable and united Nigeria. Unity represents the ideal while diversity expresses current reality.³⁶ The objective of Nigerian nationalism is then, not dissimilar to the classical European model which emphasizes popular support and unity. However, unlike the classical model, Nigerian nationalism accepts that a stable and free society can be based on cultural pluralism, in a

³⁶ W.D. Graf, *Elections 1979*, Lagos, Daily Times, 1979, p. 36.

multinational state based on political accommodation and democracy. It thus tacitly acknowledges that ethnicity has a role to play in nation-building even while it seeks to undermine ethnicity.

CHAPTER THREE

A MORE PLURAL FEDERATION

Introduction

Nigeria provides evidence that federalism can either exacerbate or mitigate ethnic conflict. Much depends on the number of component states in a federation, their boundaries and their ethnic composition. Particularly important is the distribution of the political units. Ethnicity can be incompatible with nationalism and nation-building especially if the federal arrangement is that of a few number of large ethnic states or regions. This was the case in Nigeria in the 1960s. Legitimation of the Nigerian state proved impossible to obtain. It experienced a thirty month-long civil war involving a separatist attempt. The reason for this war was not just the existence of ethnicity. It was largely the fact that the central state was controlled by the economically inferior Muslim Hausa/Fulani by virtue of their domination of the giant Northern Region. The resources of the state were used by this group for its own benefit to the detriment of the other groups. This was particularly resented by the other two dominant groups, the Yoruba and Igbo, who possessed superior economic power and controlled two of the three regions of the federation, but who were denied political power at the centre. The Igbo in the east sought to wrest power from the Hausa/Fulanis but were repressed. They turned to secession to form a new state, Biafra, which was given considerable international support. Biafra was defeated in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). However, the result was not a revival of Hausa/Fulani domination.

In this chapter, I shall examine how Nigeria has managed, since the civil war, to prevent secession and, also to resist any attempts to impose domination by any one

or more ethnic regions. One major attempt is structural. This is the effort to make the federation more pluralistic through the creation of smaller State governments. To do this, the military took a federal system that reinforced the tripartite ethnic divisions in the country and divided it first into 12, then 19, and 21, and now 30 states. In each of the three former ethno-regional blocks, there are now several states with different needs and resources, each with a separate centre of development, each imposing a unique line of cleavage across the once common bond of ethno-regionalism.¹ The uncommon ethnicity of the various minority groups who control almost half of the states has also been given prominent expression, breaking the dominance of the majority groups.² Logically, all of this should mean 'flexible shifting alliances, depending on issues, instead of the old, rigid, geographically defined political positions'.³ In particular, it means the end of overt regional power that was such a deep source of insecurity and tension in the First Republic.⁴ In short, it should undermine ethnicity and fears of domination by a sectional elite.

THE CREATION OF STATES: BACKGROUND

The idea of creating more states was first proposed in the 1950s by members of minority ethnic groups as a safeguard against domination by the three major groups. The proposal was rejected by the colonial government. Their Nigerian

¹ Larry Diamond, "Cleavage, Conflict and Anxiety in the Second Nigerian Republic", in *JMAS*, 20, 4, 1982, p. 630.

² *Ibidem*, p. 630.

³ Jean Herskovits, "Dateline Nigeria: a Black power", in *Foreign Policy*, Washington D.C., 29, Winter 1977-8, p. 179, in *Ibidem*, p. 631.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 631.

successors were no more in favour of the idea than were their alien predecessors. What the regional governments dominated by their respective major ethnic groups were really against was the creation of states within their own regions. They supported and often instigated minority disaffection in rival regions. In 1963 the Igbo-dominated NCNC and Hausa/Fulani-dominated NPC conspired to carve out a fourth region, the Mid-West Region, from the Western Region, the territorial base of the opposition AG. In 1967 the four regions were reconstituted into twelve states. The Nigerian leader, Yakubu Gowon, announced the new federal structure a few hours before the Eastern Region announced its secession from Nigeria. The plan was to de-stabilize the Eastern Region and to provide the minorities within the region with good reason to dissociate themselves from the secessionists. Like in the 1963 exercise, ethnic differences had been exploited to create more states. Gowon, however, claimed that the exercise was guided by the need to achieve unity and stability in Nigeria.⁵ This claim was given further credence by the Murtala Mohammed regime which ousted Gowon in 1975. The Irekfe Commission appointed by Mohammed to investigate the issue of creating more states hailed state creation as a guarantee for political stability in Nigeria and recommended the reorganization of the federation into 19 states.⁶ General Mohammed, while announcing the new 19 states in 1976, observed that the exercise was to bring government nearer to the people and ensure even development

⁵ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: a Documentary Source Book 1966-69, Vol. 1, January 1966-July 67*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 444-449.

⁶ *Report of the Panel Appointed by the Federal Government to Investigate the Issue of the Creation of More States and Boundary Adjustments in Nigeria*, Lagos, Government Press, December 1975, p. 18.

through out the country.⁷ The creation of more states therefore became justified on three related grounds: the need for unity, the need for peace and stability, and the need for even development and popular participation in government. Thus what was initially rejected by politicians came to be popularised by military nation-builders as the foundation for a new Nigeria.

The 1979 transfer of power from the military to politicians provoked an unprecedented number of demands for new states from nearly every existing state. It became evident that the agitations for more states were no longer a minority affair. As many as fifty four requests from both ethnic minority and majority groups had been received by the national assembly in 1983. The avalanche of requests led to the establishment of two committees in May 1983 to investigate the issue. Before the politicians could create any more states the military deposed them.

In 1986 the Babangida regime set up the Political Bureau to make recommendations to it on the political future of the country. In its report the bureau recommended that six more states be created in the interest of national stability. It made a special case for the creation of Wawa State from Anambra State, pointing out that Igbo land deserved another state in the interest of justice.⁸ 'The creation of at least one state in Igbo land should serve to reassure the Igbos that they have been reintegrated into the Nigerian political scene and thereby end the profound sense of frustration which led to strident calls for confederal arrangement by the Igbos.'⁹ Two

⁷ *Daily Times*, Wednesday, February 4, 1976, p. 3 in Omolade Adejuyigbe, "Rationale and Effect of State Creation in Nigeria with Reference to the 19 States", in A.B. Akinyemi et al. (eds.), *Readings on Federalism*, Lagos, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979, p. 192.

⁸ "Federal Government Views on the Political Bureau Report", in *National Concord*, Friday, August 21, 1987, p. 11.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

of the six recommended states were created in 1987, bringing the total number of states to 21. In announcing the new states, President Babangida stated that the decision had been taken within the context of national interest, and the increasing cost of running state governments.¹⁰ He warned that his administration would not tolerate any more agitations for states. Yet, in 1991 he was persuaded by persistent agitations for states to create nine new ones, bringing the total to 30 states. What does the creation of states mean for Nigerian nationalism and nation-building?

In this chapter I shall examine how the empirical record measures up to expectations that it would foster unity and stability. I shall do this in relation to those divisive issues which the exercise was expected to redress. These are mainly the domination of the federal government by a sectional group and domination by ethnic majority groups. Demands for the creation of more states between 1954 and 1967 were usually justified on the basis that it would ensure the unity of the country, particularly in relation to complaints about the practice of regionalism and the huge size of the old Northern Region vis-a-vis the rest of the country.¹¹ One report concluded that 'until these two threats are removed, they labour in vain who labour for Nigerian unity and solidarity'.¹² The huge size of the Northern Region has in theory ceased to be a problem since the creation of 12 states in 1967. However, the related problem of Hausa/Fulani domination of political power is still seen as a major problem. By regionalism is meant the situation whereby enormous power was exercised by the regional governments. The power and influence of the central government was weak

¹⁰ *National Concord*, Lagos, Friday September 25, 1987, p. 14.

¹¹ Adejuyigbe, "Rationale and Effect of State Creation in Nigeria with reference to the 19 States", *op. cit.*, pp. 192-3.

¹² *Nigerian Outlook*, Enugu, 14 October, 1965, p. 5, in *Ibidem*, p. 193.

in relation to the regions. The regional governments were therefore able to challenge its authority. This effectively ensured the domination of the regions by the large ethnic groups. To maintain and consolidate control of the regional governments, the three dominant ethnic groups and their respective political parties subjected their ethnic communities to political oppression, economic discrimination and cultural domination. Between 1947 and 1955 there emerged a number of minority parties that championed the creation of states for these communities. The proponents of the new states expected that their creation would end such domination and allow their areas to achieve greater opportunities for cultural, political and economic development and a greater share of federal government resources.

It might be asked why there was intense competition for the central government since its authority was weak vis-a-vis the regional governments? Why did control of the centre mean so much to the groups? The answer is crucial to an understanding of nationalism for it shows that nationalism is a universal feature of human societies not just a manifestation of industrial rationalism. For the Nigerian political elites, who had successfully utilized the ideology of nationalism to oust colonial rule while creating national communities within colonial Nigeria, what remained to be established was who presided over the state taken from the British. In other words, the struggle for independence amounted to a struggle for succession to colonial power and privilege, that is the right to replace one elite with another.¹³ National politics was therefore a battle for supremacy. The game was not to broaden opportunities for exercising power but rather to gain political domination. Political nationalism, which is essentially competition for power by exclusion, is a consistent and recurrent feature of human

¹³ William D. Graf, *The Nigerian State*, London, James Currey, 1988, p. 18.

grouping. Traditionally, such nationalism among the constituent Nigerian groups largely took the form of war, with its prize as honour and wealth in slaves or land for hunting, animal husbandry or agriculture. Now, that competition continues within the boundaries of a state which itself claims a legitimate monopoly of the use of physical force. Such competition therefore seldom takes the form of war but rather centres upon competition for state power, the distributive source of honour and wealth.

With disunity in Nigeria perceived as the result of disparities in the relative size and power of the regions and ethnic groups, it remains to ask to what extent the creation of a more plural federation has mitigated such disparities. I shall examine its effect on the dominant position of the majorities and that of the Northern Region with its related problem of Hausa/Fulani monopoly on power.

TABLE 1
States by Region

| <u>Region</u> | <u>States 1967</u> | <u>1976</u> | <u>1987</u> | <u>1991</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Northern | Benue Plateau | Benue | Benue | Benue |
| | | Plateau | Plateau | *Kogi Plateau |
| | Kano Kwara | Kano | Kano | Kano |
| | | Kwara | Kwara | Kwara |
| | North Central | Kaduna | Kaduna | Kaduna |
| | | | Katsina | Katsina |
| | North Eastern | Borno | Borno | Borno |
| | | | Bauchi | *Yobe Bauchi |
| | | | Gongola | Gongola |
| | North Western | Sokoto | Sokoto | *Tarabe Sokoto |
| | | Niger | *Kebbi Niger | |
| | | | | |
| Western | Mid-western | Bendel | Bendel | Edo |
| | Western | Oyo | Oyo | *Delta Oyo |
| | | Ondo | Ondo | *Osun Ondo |
| | Lagos | Ogun | Ogun | Ogun |
| Eastern | East Central | Lagos | Lagos | Lagos |
| | | Anambra | Anambra | Anambra |
| | | Imo | Imo | *Enugu Imo |
| | Rivers | Rivers | Rivers | *Abia Rivers |
| | Southeastern | Cross River | Cross River | Cross River |
| | Akwa Ibom | Akwa Ibom | | |

* New states created in 1991

NORTHERN DOMINATION

The area of the former Northern Region formed six of the 12 states created in 1967. It contained 10 of the 19 states created in 1976, and 11 of the 21 states created in 1987. These states have different needs and resources as well as separate centres of development. This should impose new lines of cleavage across the once common

bond of regionalism. Such a condition should be favourable for undermining ethno-regional bonds. Murtala Mohammed in his inaugural address to the Constitutional Drafting Committee stated that 'the fear of the predominance of one Region' had been largely removed by the creation of more states.¹⁴ The empirical record controverts this assumption. Nigerians still complain bitterly about northern domination. Why?

Structurally, it makes sense to talk about northern domination. The share of the north in the 'national cake' is still greater than that of the south because of the principle of equality of states (adopted together with the creation of states) for the share out of national resources. As Table 2 shows, on the basis of equality of states, the Northern Region would have been entitled to 33.3 percent on independence and 25 percent in 1963 when the Mid-West region was created. In 1967 when it contained six states, it was entitled to 50 percent. In 1976, when it contained 10 of the 19 states created it gained 52.6 percent. With 11 of the 21 states it still retained its advantage with 52.4 percent.

TABLE 2
% of Total Share of National Resources on the Basis of Equality of States

| <u>REGION</u> | <u>1954-1963</u> | <u>1963-1967</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Northern | 33.3 | 25% |
| Western | 33.3 | 25% |
| Eastern | 33.3 | 25% |
| Mid-Western ¹⁵ | | 25% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Other criteria used in the share-out of federated resources, in addition to equality, include population needs, the number of local government areas, and school

¹⁴ Address by the Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed, on 18 October 1975, reproduced in *Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee containing the Draft Constitution*, vol. 1, Lagos, Government Printer, 1976, pp. x1-x1iii.

¹⁵ Mid-Western Region was carved out of the Western Region after a referendum was held in the Benin and Delta provinces of the region in 1963.

enrolment. However, of all the distributive principles, two - equality and population - have been elevated to the virtual exclusion of the others. What the federal government invariably does is to allocate 50 percent equally and 50 percent according to relative population among states.¹⁶ Table 3 shows that when the two principles of equality and population are applied the north has gained from the south.

TABLE 3
State Share of Distributable Federal Resources (19 States)
Based on 50% Equality and 50% Population

| <u>Region</u> | <u>State</u> | <u>Pop.</u> | <u>%Total</u> | <u>50%</u> | <u>50%</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Northern | Benue | 2,427,018 | 4.36 | 2.631 | 2.180 | 4.811 |
| | Plateau | 2,016,657 | 3.64 | 2.631 | 1.820 | 5.451 |
| | Bauchi | 2,431,296 | 4.37 | 2.631 | 2.185 | 4.816 |
| | Borno | 2,952,187 | 5.30 | 2.631 | 2.650 | 5.281 |
| | Gongola | 2,650,573 | 4.76 | 2.631 | 2.380 | 5.011 |
| | Kwara | 1,714,485 | 3.08 | 2.631 | 1.540 | 4.171 |
| | Kaduna | 4,098,305 | 7.36 | 2.631 | 3.680 | 6.311 |
| | Kano | 5,774,842 | 10.37 | 2.631 | 5.185 | 7.816 |
| | Niger | 1,194,508 | 2.15 | 2.631 | 1.075 | 3.706 |
| | Sokoto | 4,538,788 | 8.15 | 2.631 | 4.075 | 6.706 |
| Western | Lagos | 1,443,567 | 2.59 | 2.631 | 1.295 | 3.926 |
| | Ogun | 1,550,966 | 2.79 | 2.631 | 1.395 | 4.025 |
| | Oyo | 5,208,884 | 9.36 | 2.631 | 4.680 | 7.311 |
| | Ondo | 2,727,675 | 4.90 | 2.631 | 2.450 | 5.081 |
| | Bendel | 2,533,067 | 4.55 | 2.631 | 2.275 | 4.906 |
| Eastern | Anambra | 3,571,072 | 6.41 | 2.631 | 3.205 | 5.836 |
| | Imo | 3,706,820 | 6.66 | 2.631 | 3.330 | 5.961 |
| | Rivers | 1,585,125 | 2.85 | 2.631 | 1.425 | 4.056 |
| | Cross-River | 3,534,217 | 6.35 | 2.631 | 3.175 | 5.806 |
| Total | 19 | 55,679,052 | 100 | 50.00 | 50.00 | 100 |

Source: O. Adejuyigbe, "Rationale and Effect of State Creation in Nigeria with Reference to the 19 States", op. cit., p. 211. Population based on 1963 census.

In the distribution of parliamentary seats the same pattern is maintained. In the First Republic, the north had the same number of senators as the other regions.

¹⁶ J.I. Elaigwu, "The Military and State Building: Federal-State Relations in Nigeria's 'Military Federalism' 1966-1976", in Akinyemi et al., op. cit., p. 178.

However, in the federal parliament it had 174 out of the 312 seats, that is, 55.8 percent. In 1963, when the Mid-West Region was created, its representation dropped slightly to 167 out of the 312 seats. During the Second Republic it had 50 out of the 95 senators in the Senate on the basis of 5 senators per State. Seats in the Federal House of Assembly were allocated according to population size. Consequently, the share out of assembly seats reflected the number of local government areas in the country. The northern states together had 240 seats out of a total of 445 making 53.9 percent. In the Third Republic scheduled for 1993, the northern states with about 53 percent majority (11 of 21 states and 16 of the 30 created in 1991) would still be entitled to more seats in the two national assemblies. The numerical power of the north in the parliament was as a result of its population. Today, nobody knows exactly what the population of Nigeria is or how it is distributed.¹⁷

With development projects the north still predominates. On the basis of equality of states, the northern states together would still be entitled to a greater share than all the southern states put together. Not much has changed. In the First Republic there were complaints that most developments in the 1962-68 development plan were concentrated in the Northern Region.¹⁸

A recent development project that has caused much ethnic disaffection is the

¹⁷ This statement remains valid even though a census was conducted late in 1991. The census figures showed that Nigeria is not as large as it had previously claimed, contradicting internationally accepted trends in demographic data. The total figure of 88.5 million people suggested that Nigeria's population is shrinking rather than growing at the UN verified yearly population growth rate of over 3.0 percent. However the greatest criticism has been elicited by the figures for the states. While some states showed an unprecedented increase of 293.5 percent, some increased by a mere 9.21 percent. Most states are challenging their population figures at the census tribunal set up in 1992 by government. The new figures have not however been reflected in the distribution of parliamentary seats.

¹⁸ B.J. Dudley, "Federalism and the Balance of Political Power in Nigeria", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. IV, 1966, pp. 16-29, in Adejuyigbe, op. cit., p. 203.

relocation of the capital from Lagos to Abuja. The site for the new federal capital about 400 square miles right in the middle of the country was chosen by government for its national symbolism. Its central position was expected to reassure the various groups of its neutral ethnic status. But it is still seen by some groups, particularly the Yoruba, as a symbol of northern domination due to its location in the area of the old northern region. During the 1979 elections it was made a crucial political issue with the Awolowo-led UPN leading the anti-Abuja campaign. It was in order to avoid this sort of interpretation that the government chose a majority of Yorubas to serve on the relocation committee.¹⁹

Politically, it makes sense to talk about the north in the context of contemporary Nigeria. Northern elites, in particular, the Hausa/Fulani, have deliberately ensured that the idea of 'One North, One people, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe', promoted by the defunct NPC is not forgotten despite the creation of states. The group interests of this elite, especially Islam and the maintenance of political power, has compelled them to seek to preserve the status quo.²⁰ Between 1966 and 1979 they consolidated their power under the banner of 'northern interests' in contradistinction to 'Islamic interests' which they championed in the First Republic.

Many institutions have helped to guard, defend and consolidate northern interests from encroachment. Prominent among them are the *New Nigeria* Newspapers and the Federal Radio Corporation Kaduna, originally established by the Northern Region to champion its interest. Under the 12-state structure the idea of one

¹⁹ *Hotline*, Kaduna, March 31, 1987, p. 13.

²⁰ Obaro Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", in *Africa Events*, London, April, 1987, p. 35.

north was advanced through the Interim Common Service Agency for the Northern States. Murtala Mohammed abolished the agency and nationalized the *New Nigerian* (jointly owned by the northern states) in an attempt to create a more conducive basis for national integration.²¹ Despite its nationalization, the *New Nigerian* still champions northern interests albeit within the wider context of national unity. Under Shagari, in 1982, Kaduna Polytechnic, jointly owned by the northern states, introduced new fees discriminating against southerners.²² Under the corrective military regime of Muhammadu Buhari representatives of northern states met regularly to discuss matters of northern interest.²³ These meetings were subsequently stopped by the government after complaints that they were inimical to national unity.²⁴ The idea of the north as one solidary unit is still maintained through newspaper and magazine campaigns. *The Hotline* magazine was established in 1985 to articulate and promote northern view points on national issues. One of its editorials defended its ethno-regional stance thus:

We see no need to dismantle our solidarity or weaken our power base.
 Effective compromise or collaboration is based on positions of strength.
 And we must be strong to participate in meeting the challenge of a
 viable one Nigeria. We therefore disclaim the attempt ... to dismantle

²¹ Elaigwu, "The Military and State Building: Federal-State Relations in Nigeria's 'Military Federalism' 1966-1976", op. cit., p. 180.

²² E. Osaghae, "Do Ethnic Minorities Still Exist?" in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. XXIV, no 2, July, 1986, p. 164.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

²⁴ States in the old Western and Eastern Regions also held similar meetings.

Northern solidarities and create the impression of disunity to facilitate dubious Southern incursions into Northern political strong holds.²⁵

The continued use of former geo-regional formations, and the reference to the north as a corporate group with common interests that had to be championed, attest to the inability of many Nigerians to transcend parochial loyalties.

It is important to point out that northern solidarity is only a euphemism for Islamic solidarity. Non-Muslims in the region have been politically insignificant, being used by the muslim ruling group as mere pawns. There has never been a solidary north. The minorities within the north have always opposed the Hausa /Fulani rulers as evidenced by the Tiv rebellions between 1960 and 64. Although the term south is used to refer to the area south of the old Northern Region, it is not meant to convey a solidary region. It is only a short hand term for the old Western and Eastern Regions. Because of the rivalry between the elites of the two large ethnic groups that respectively occupy these two regions - Yoruba and Igbo - the south has never been united. This has facilitated the situation in which the Hausa/Fulani has been able to monopolize power.

HAUSA/FULANI MONOPOLY OF POWER

The Hausa/Fulani have continued to monopolize power in Nigeria despite the creation of more states. Of the eight executive heads of state that Nigeria has had since independence, six of them have come from the north and two from the south. Of the six from the north, four are Hausa/Fulani, one is a Muslim from Minna (Niger

²⁵ *Hotline*, Kaduna, April, 1987, pp. 6-7.

State). The sixth, Gowon, an Angas man and a Christian, was chosen by the Hausa/Fulani coup plotters in 1966 to succeed the Igbo military leader whom they assassinated. The only Yoruba, Obasanjo, is believed to have held power due 'to the magnanimity of the majority of northern military officer corps'.²⁶

TABLE 4
Ethnic Origins of Nigeria's Heads of State

| <u>President</u> | <u>Ethnicity</u> | <u>Region</u> | <u>Yrs. in office</u> |
|------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Balewa | Fulani | North | 6 years |
| Aguiyi-Ironsi | Igbo | East | 6 months |
| Gowon | Angas | North | 9 years |
| Murtala | Fulani | North | 13 months |
| Obasanjo | Yoruba | West | 4 years |
| Shagari | Fulani | North | 4 years |
| Buhari | Fulani | North | 19 months |
| Babangida | Minna (Muslim) | North | 7 years |

The Hausa/Fulani control of power in the First Republic derived from the group's control of the NPC, the governing party in the Northern Region. Together with the Hausa/Fulani were several other groups such as the Kanuri, Tiv, Idoma, Angas, Jukun, Nupe and Igala that occupied the region. Thus, Hausa/Fulani control of the centre could not have been without the support of some of these groups despite its majority status in the region. However, the electoral system and the federal structure in the First Republic facilitated the repression and coercion of minority groups within the region. In contrast, the new federal structure facilitates the expression of northern heterogeneity more accurately than the previous regional structure had permitted. The minority groups in the north have separate states of their own now. As Table 6 shows, the Hausa/Fulani dominate in four of the 19 states: Sokoto, Kano, Bauchi and Katsina. They control traditional power in the new Kaduna State although they are numerically

²⁶ A.M. Mainasara, "Obasanjo's Northern Phobia", *Hotline*, Kaduna, March 31, 1987, p. 22.

in the minority. In the new 30-state structure, Kebbi State carved out of Sokoto State gives them control of five states.²⁷ The degree to which the Hausa/Fulani can control Nigeria through a democratically elected government still depends on cooperation from other areas. In the Second Republic their attempt to maintain power by rallying the old north failed. Northern minority states exercised their new influence by voting against the Hausa/Fulani-dominated NPN. The group however captured power at the centre with others across Nigeria, particularly the eastern minority states, as junior partners. Thus, the creation of states has not solved the problem of Hausa/Fulani domination of the central government. It has, however, reduced the overall power of the Hausa/Fulani, so that it is no longer plausible for them to think of dominating the whole country.²⁸

The new system acted as a kind of electoral reform. It replaced the former winner-take-all formula, which gave unlimited power to the largest regional party and the largest ethnic group supporting the party, with a kind of proportional representation.²⁹ Thus, although the ruling party had a core support in the Hausa/Fulani areas in the Second Republic, it could not use the resources of the federal state to the exclusive benefit of those areas as it did in the First Republic. The support it enjoyed outside the Hausa/Fulani areas would have eroded. That extra-regional support was more important than it was for the predecessor NPC in the First Republic.³⁰ Although there are still threats from the Muslim north to dominate

²⁷ The Yoruba and Igbo control five and four states respectively.

²⁸ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 612.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 612.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 638.

Nigeria as a whole, this could be contained by the fear that if that leads to secession on the part of other regions the north would be left in a rather poor state. Furthermore, the Hausa/Fulani threat to dominate Nigeria is mitigated by the liberation of the numerous ethnic minority groups in the middle belt of the old Northern Region from their former Hausa/Fulani rulers. These ethnic groups whose identities were subsumed under the dominant Muslim Hausa/Fulani identity have now adopted an overarching Christian identity in their revolt against their former rulers. This competition between previous rulers and subjects is redrawing cultural boundaries in Nigeria. The final outcome of the contest no doubt has far reaching implications for the future of Nigeria as a nation.

TABLE 5
Ethnic Control of the 12-State Federation

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>ETHNIC GROUPS</u> | <u>CONTROL</u> |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Benue Plateau | Tiv/Idoma/Angas/others | minority |
| Kano | Hausa/Fulani | majority |
| Kwara | Yoruba/Igbira/others | majority |
| North Central | Hausa/Fulani/others | majority |
| North Eastern | Kanuri/Fulani/Marghi/Mumuye/Chamba | minority |
| North Western | Hausa/Fulani/others | majority |
| Mid-Western | Edo/Urhobo/Igbo | minority |
| Western | Yoruba | majority |
| Lagos | Yoruba/others | majority |
| East Central | Igbo | majority |
| Rivers | Ijaw/Igbo/others | minority |
| South Eastern | Efik/Ibibio/Anang/Ekoi | minority |

TABLE 6
Ethnic Control of the 21-State Federation

| STATE | ETHNICITY | % of POPULATION | CONTROL |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|----------|
| Benue | Tiv | 48.58 | minority |
| | Igala | 23.15 | |
| | Idoma | 18.52 | |
| Plateau | Angas | 39.98 | minority |
| | Birrom | 11.11 | |
| | Hausa | 10.24 | |
| | Fulani | 6.97 | |
| | others | 25.68 | |
| Kano | Hausa | 69.24 | majority |
| | Fulani | 25.00 | |
| | others | 5.76 | |
| Kaduna | Hausa | * | minority |
| | Fulani | * | |
| | (non-Muslims) | * | |
| *Katsina | Hausa | * | majority |
| | Fulani | * | |
| | others | * | |
| Niger | Nupe | 39.13 | minority |
| | Gwari | 25.43 | |
| | others | 35.44 | |
| Kwara | Yoruba | 60.31 | majority |
| | Igbira | 19.89 | |
| | Nupe | 7.69 | |
| | others | 12.11 | |
| Bauchi | Fulani | 40.11 | majority |
| | Hausa | 24.55 | |
| | others | 35.34 | |
| Sokoto | Hausa | 82.72 | majority |
| | Fulani | 12.31 | |
| | others | 4.97 | |
| Gongola | Marghi | 16.86 | minority |
| | Fulani | 15.98 | |
| | Mumuye | 13.64 | |
| | Chamba | 10.27 | |
| | others | 43.25 | |

| | | | | |
|-------------|--------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| Borno | Kanuri | 52.04 | minority | |
| | Fulani | 9.66 | | |
| | Marghi | 9.59 | | |
| | Others | 28.71 | | |
| Lagos | Yoruba | 76.18 | majority | |
| | others | 23.18 | | |
| Ondo | Yoruba | 90.92 | majority | |
| | others | 9.08 | | |
| Oyo | Yoruba | 98.92 | majority | |
| Ogun | Yoruba | 96.22 | majority | |
| Bendel | Edo + | 60.88 | minority | |
| | Urhobo | | | |
| | Igbo | | | 24.16 |
| | Ijaw | | | 9.00 |
| | others | 5.96 | | |
| Anambra | Igbo | 97.15 | majority | |
| Imo | Igbo | 96.53 | majority | |
| Rivers | Ijaw | 48.29 | minority | |
| | Igbo | 34.11 | | |
| | Ogoni | 12.61 | | |
| | others | 4.99 | | |
| Cross River | Efik | * | minority | |
| | Ekoi | * | | |
| | Iyalla | * | | |
| | Anang | * | | |
| | others | * | | |
| *Akwa Ibom | Ibibio | * | minority ³¹ | |
| | others | | | |

³¹ Figures for FCT Abuja not available. Source: Adapted from Adejuyigbe, op. cit., p. 207.

*In Kaduna State the southern Zaria peoples (the many minority non-Muslim groups south of the Zaria Emirate) are in the majority, while in Katsina State the Hausa form the majority. Katsina State was carved out Kaduna State whose population was as follows: Hausa 61.12, Fulani 18.82, and others 20.00. These others form the majority in the new Kaduna State created in 1987. In Cross River there is no dominant majority whereas in Akwa Ibom the Ibibio are clearly dominant. Akwa Ibom was carved out of Cross River whose population before restructuring was as follows: Ibibio 76.78, Ekoi 12.33, and others 10.89.

The dominant role and place of the Hausa/Fulani in Nigerian politics is a crucial issue for Nigerian nationalism.³² It is seen as the fundamental cause of instability in the country.³³ The Yoruba-based newspaper, *Nigerian Tribune*, observed that it 'has resulted in unjust government policies about the share of the nation's resources, unequal opportunity, injustices and inequities'.³⁴ Headships of certain key ministries are reserved for members of the group and polls are rigged to ensure that the group maintains its monopoly on power.³⁵ In the Second Republic, many company owners in the south felt that unless they brought in northerners to their Boards they would have insurmountable difficulties in obtaining needed import licenses.³⁶ Some southerners, particularly Igbos, have adopted Hausa names or Islam in order to 'get on'. 'In any ministry, or any where if you call yourself "Alhaji" you're accepted, you're welcome, the doors open'.³⁷ Such perceptions have provoked calls for a rotation of power 'to re-assure Nigerians that they belong to Nigeria'.³⁸ As one report observed, the clamour for confederation by some groups should not be construed as a lack of love for Nigeria:

It is not necessarily for their love of little republics in every corner of the

³² Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", op. cit., p. 35.

³³ Editorial, *Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, Friday, February, 27, 1987, p. 9.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³⁶ Ikime, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁷ Interview with Brigadier Adekunle in *Vanguard*, Lagos, Wednesday, October 1, 1986, p. 6.

³⁸ D.A. Ejoor, "A Philosophy Of Government for the Future", paper presented at the National Seminar on the National Question, at Abuja, August 4, 1986, p. 6.

administration, and thus, it became further entrenched. As a result Hausa came to be widely spoken even in the non-Hausa areas of the region. It thus makes sense to refer to them as Hausa-Fulani but such reference does not imply a merger of both groups. They are each distinguishable. Those who control power are the Fulani.

DOMINATION BY ETHNIC MAJORITY GROUPS

The creation of states has mitigated minority fear of domination by the three major ethnic groups. It has given prominence to the uncommon ethnicity of the minority groups and granted their elites access to power. This has added to the legitimacy of the federal centre. The break-up of Nigeria would not be in the interests of the many minorities who have been able to negotiate political alliances to assert and pursue their interests. During the war, it was the minorities who contributed most to the win-the-war efforts.

The new federal structure has not, however, affected the possibility of the three groups being influential in the affairs of the country. Given the new criteria for the sharing of federated resources, viz. equality and population, they will still predominate. The three major ethnic groups form the majority in more than half of the total number of states. The total population of the three groups - Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo - by the 1963 census was 36,904,008, which is 66 percent of the total for the country.

The proliferation of states has, however, reduced the overall power of the majority groups. It is no longer plausible for them to think they can challenge the power of central government. In this fundamental sense the new federal structure has been beneficial to Nigerian unity. It has restored the authority and influence of the state which was weakened by the former formula in which the federal units controlled

by the three major groups were more powerful than the centre. This means that secession is an unlikely option for ethnic pluralism in Nigeria. No group is now in a position to relegate the federal government to the background. Because the states are now dependent on the central government for their maintenance, they are more likely to combine in order to put more pressure on the federal government to allocate funds to them rather than to challenge its authority. Thus, the 'Nigerian state has come to stay' because of the new federal formula.⁴⁴ Its authority and legitimacy is no longer in question.⁴⁵ This is auspicious for nationalism.

Rivalry between the three major groups is still intense despite the creation of states. This rivalry is, however, mitigated by two factors. One, some of the inter-ethnic conflict between the groups has been dispersed into more parochial forums by their division into smaller political units. The other factor is that the minorities hold the balance of power between the majority groups. The space created by majority rivalry has allowed the minorities to prosper. They have been able to exploit this space to negotiate political alliances to assert their economic and political interests. Their support is essential for any of the major groups to gain power at the centre. They exploited this factor to bargain for a share in the country's top political offices during the Second Republic. For instance, they used the fact that they were the deciding factor in the NPN's success in the 1979 elections to get the presidency of the senate. In return for their continued support, the NPN minority caucus of politicians wanted the development of minority areas, more Federal patronage for minority contractors, more

⁴⁴J. Isawa Elaigwu, "The Military and State Building: the Federal-State Relations in Nigeria's 'Military Federalism' 1966-1976", *op. cit.*, p. 169

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

distributorships, more investments in the minority areas and more commission agents. In short, they wanted economic power to rival, or even better, that of the majorities. Despite their enhanced position, the minorities still accuse the majorities of domination.⁴⁶ Minority politics is thus not dissimilar to majority politics.

The issue of state creation is no longer a palliative for ethnic minority fear of domination. But, fear of domination remains the major justification for agitations for new states. For instance, the demand for an Anioma State from Bendel State in 1987 was motivated by the 'desire to counter oppression, denigration, denial of opportunities to develop, peripheralization and burgeoning monarchism'.⁴⁷ Burgeoning monarchism means political and cultural domination by the Bini (Edo) majority in the state. The movement for the creation of Delta State from Bendel State was marred by accusations of Urhobo domination by the Itsekiri group. A group speaking for the Itsekiris called for talks to agree on 'an accord on non-domination anchored upon the permanent protection of the permanent interest of all the minorities in Delta State in general and the Itsekiris in particular viz: the inviolability of the person and title of the Olu of Warri'.⁴⁸

The politics of state creation has added a new dimension to the categories of domination. In each state created there is now a new majority and minority groups which continue to agitate for the creation of even more states. Sometimes the concern is not a majority/minority one but ethnic incompatibility or environmental differences. In the Rivers State, which is itself a minority state, the division is between fresh water

⁴⁶ See for instance Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: the Brink of Disaster*, Lagos, Saros Publishers, 1991, p. 35.

⁴⁷ *National Concord*, Lagos, Friday, August 21, 1987, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Advert entitled "Itsekiris and Delta State", *Vanguard*, Lagos, Thursday, August 13, 1987, p. 14.

and salt water areas. In Anambra, an all-Igbo state, it is north/south dichotomy. In Bendel State, despite the fact that the colonial provinces have been dismantled a long time ago, there is a dichotomy based on the former colonial Benin and Delta provinces.⁴⁹ In the Second Republic accusations of ethnic domination and incompatibility were frequently used by the more homogeneous Igbo and Yoruba groups in their demands for more states. For instance, proponents of Ijebu State complained of being isolated and rejected by the other Yorubas. Proponents of Aba and Onitsha States (both Igbo groups) claimed that they had no cultural affinity binding them. The new federal framework has thus provided arenas in which intra-ethnic conflict can occur. This is good for conflict reduction at the all-Nigeria level. However, in view of the recurring demands for more states, a cynic might well wonder how much state creation is a project for national unity, a general project of the ruling elite, or a series of particularistic, special interest ploys for access to political power and its benefits.

As a strategy for unity, state creation has been based on the exploitation rather than amelioration of ethnic differences. The 1967 exercise was primarily intended to undermine the impending secession of the Eastern Region. Once the need for creating states in the east was established, states had to be created elsewhere.⁵⁰ In spite of this limitation, the 1967 exercise effectively tackled the problem of the huge size of the Northern Region. It had the added advantage of promoting political stability as it granted both the north and south equal number of states. But, the 1976 exercise recreated the old imbalance. Igbo apologists condemned it as a conspiracy between

⁴⁹ Ikime, *op. cit.*, p. 41

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba against the Igbo.⁵¹ The 1987 exercise created two new states, one in the north and the other in the east. It was the Hausa/Fulani and the northern and eastern minorities that gained. Igbo apologists did not like it because it effectively made the Igbo a minority group in a Region where they were once dominant.⁵² The Igbo campaign for more states led to the creation of nine new states in 1991. This exercise favoured the Igbo who gained two new states. In addition, the capital of Delta State, comprising the Igbo on the west bank of the Niger, the Urhobo, the Itsekiri and the Ijaw, was sited in an Igbo town.

The recurring demands for states is understandable. Under the present arrangement for the allocation to individual states of about 90 percent of their revenue from federal resources, ownership of a state is seen as the greatest amenity an ethnic group can achieve. Moreover, since state creation offered the development of state capitals outside the traditional centres of development, the idea is reinforced that the creation of states leads to the development of growth centres. The election of the president is also a major consideration by both majority and minority groups in making demands for more states. The more states an ethnic group has the more likely it is to produce the president and thereby control the federal government. The constitution stipulates that the president elect must have at least one quarter of the votes cast in two-thirds of the states. These ethnocentric justifications for states can only mean that ethnicity is still a vigorous concept.

However, the fact that the groups are demanding more states within Nigeria can

⁵¹ F.J. Ellah, *Nigeria and States Creation*, Port Harcourt, Chief J.W. Ellah, Sons & Co., 1983, pp. 76-77. See also Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, London, Heinemann, 1983, p. 49.

⁵² *Newswave*, December, 14, 1988, p. 9.

be taken to demonstrate a desire for a Nigerian nation-state. What is therefore seen by the ethnic groups to be at stake is equal access to the 'national cake'. Ethnicity, as identity and as pragmatic pursuit of economic and political advantage, is therefore, in the context of state creation, the route to the political centre. In that way ethnicity largely contributes, albeit in an unintended manner, to the legitimacy of the federal political arena.

The proliferation of states has then, not undermined ethnicity. But it has provided Nigeria with a politics of conciliation. Although images of the old regional structure still remain firmly rooted in the minds of many Nigerians and accusations of majority domination are still rife, some of the ethnic conflict has been dispersed into more parochial forums. New arenas for intra-ethnic conflict to occur have been created by the division of the large ethnic states and the increase in the number of the constituent units of the federation. There are now incentives for political cooperation which were not there in the First Republic. Domination by one ethnic group is no longer plausible. Groups not well represented at the federal level have now more opportunities to participate in government through their state or local governments. This should enable disparities between the groups to reduce so that dissatisfaction can decline, thereby promoting nationalism. The more groups participate in the political centre, and the more effects that has on regional and communal interests and pursuits, the stronger will be the perception of Nigeria as an entity commanding loyalty from its people. The Nigerian experience thus provides evidence that political engineering can alter ethnic balances and alignments so that ethnicity, nationalism and nation-building are made more compatible.

CHAPTER FOUR

'ETHNIC ARITHMETIC' IN NIGERIA

Introduction

Fear of domination is characteristic of Nigerian ethnic behaviour. The majority ethnic groups fear being dominated by each other. The minority groups fear being dominated by the majority groups, especially those contiguous to them. Sub-groups and religious groups replicate these fears which increasingly become translated into resentment and discontent and subsequently protest and conflict. The salience of ethnicity for conflict in the country is, thus, conditioned by these fears. To deal with these fears, Nigeria adopted a policy of proportional representation and rewards for the ethnic groups. This idea of 'ethnic arithmetic' is enshrined in the constitution as the Federal Character principle, henceforth referred to as FC. With this principle Nigerians, at least their leaders and representatives, recognize that national cohesion cannot occur without their coming to terms with the durability of ethnicity of one sort or another.

FC provides a scale against which political actions, decisions and motives are popularly assessed. It influences the formation of political parties and the election of the president, the allocation of senatorial seats in the congress, the appointment of federal ministers and state commissioners, the recruitment and promotion of personnel into the armed forces, the police, the bureaucracy and its agencies, the location of universities and other institutions of higher learning, admission into universities and federal government secondary schools, share-out of federated revenues, the siting of industries and economic ventures, and appointments to federal commissions, boards,

and councils. Methods of applying the principle vary. It could take the form of either the quota system or positive discrimination.

In this chapter, I shall examine the policy in relation to specific issues which have tended to divide the groups. These are political parties and elections, admissions into federal government schools and universities, revenue allocation, ministerial and bureaucratic appointments.

FC AND POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Five political parties were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to participate in the 1979 elections. These were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP), the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) and the Great Nigerian Peoples' Party (GNPP). The parties were careful to balance their nominees for the presidency with deputies from regions other than that of the presidential candidate, even though this is not a constitutional requirement (see Table 1). For instance, the NPN nominated Shehu Shagari, a Fulani and a northerner from Sokoto State, with Dr. Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo from Anambra State, as his running mate. It is interesting that all the deputies are Igbo, except in the one instance where the presidential candidate is Igbo. The fact that the three important positions of power were shared by the NPN and the NPP on the basis of the old three-regional structure of the federation demonstrates that the bogey of the three regions still exists.

TABLE 1
State and Ethnic Identity of Presidential Candidates,
their Deputies and Party Chairmen

| <u>PARTY</u> | <u>CANDIDATE</u> | <u>STATE & ETHNIC ORIGIN</u> | |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| NPN | Alhaji Shehu Shagari | Sokoto | Fulani |
| UPN | Chief Obafemi Awolowo | Ogun | Yoruba |
| NPP | Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe | Anambra | Igbo |
| PRP | Alhaji Aminu Kano | Kano | Hausa/Fulani |
| GNPP | Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri | Borno | Kanuri |

| <u>PARTY</u> | <u>DEPUTY</u> | <u>STATE & ETHNIC ORIGIN</u> | |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| NPN | Dr. Alex Ekwueme | Anambra | Igbo |
| UPN | Chief Umeadi | Anambra | Igbo |
| NPP | Dr. Ishaya Audu | Kaduna | Hausa |
| PRP | Mr. Ikoku | Imo | Igbo |
| GNPP | Dr. Nzeribe | Imo | Igbo |

| <u>PARTY</u> | <u>CHAIRMAN</u> | <u>STATE & ETHNIC ORIGIN</u> | |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| NPN | Chief Akinloye | Oyo | Yoruba |
| UPN | Chief Obafemi Awolowo | Ogun | Yoruba |
| NPP | Chief Akinfosile | Ondo | Yoruba |
| PRP | Alhaji Aminu Kano | Kano | Hausa/Fulani |
| GNPP | Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri | Borno | Kanuri |

Some of the parties employed an informal 'zoning' arrangement to prevent any monopolisation of power within them by any single group. The NPN went a step further and entrenched its zoning policy in its constitution. It divided the country into four zones: the north, west, east and minorities. It further divided the zones into official spheres. The presidency, party secretaryship and some minor offices went to the northern zone. The posts of party chairman, legal adviser, treasurer and other minor offices went to the western zone. The eastern zone got the vice-presidency, deputy secretaryship and other minor offices while the minorities got the senate presidency and national assembly leadership. Rotation of official spheres between zones was to occur every four years at a general election. This rotational policy attracted most people to the party and consequently, it got the most national spread of votes.

The 1979 presidential election was controversial. Shehu Shagari, who got the most votes, did not satisfy the other electoral requirement. He got a quarter of the votes in 12 of the 19 states, whereas two-thirds of the 19 states was popularly interpreted to mean 13 states. The presidency was eventually awarded to him after a series of litigation. In the 1983 election, Shagari won at least 25 percent of the votes in 16 states but some of the results were doubtful.

Analysis of the electoral pattern in 1979 shows that the attempt to reflect FC in politics helped to give politics a national orientation. For instance, the UPN, which was viewed by opponents as a purely ethnic Yoruba movement, was able to capture as many as 19 seats in Gongola State, 35 in Bendel State and 8 in Cross River State, all non-Yoruba states. The UPN did well enough to lose the presidential election to the NPN by only 4 percent. The success of the GNPP in the northern states of Borno and Gongola, and the serious challenge it posed to the NPN in Sokoto and Niger states, helped to puncture the image of the north as politically monolithic. The success of the PRP in two northern states, Kano and Kaduna, and the challenge in Sokoto and Niger by the GNPP, brought out forcefully the class conflict between the subject Hausa and their Fulani rulers.¹ It is significant that the Hausa/Fulani votes were much more split with the NPN in the Second Republic than with the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in the First Republic. This is partly the consequence of the new federal framework which allowed a more accurate expression of northern heterogeneity than the old regional structure permitted.

The system did not eliminate ethnic voting. For instance, in the presidential

¹ Ibrahim Tahir, "Political Party Organisation", in Ukwu I. Ukwu (ed.), *Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria*, Kuru, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, 1987, p. 80.

election, the party whose candidate was a member of the ethnic majority group in eight states, won overwhelming support of the voters. Only the NPN candidate, Shagari, had the lowest support from his home state, Sokoto, largely because of the quasi-class conflict between the subject Hausa and their Fulani rulers. Shagari is Fulani. The pattern in the gubernatorial election was almost the same as in the presidential election, except that the margin of ethnic support was a little lower. Elections into the House of Representatives in the states showed a definite relationship between ethnicity and voting. NPP support was almost one quarter lower than at the presidential election in the two Igbo states, Imo and Anambra. The NPN did not have a majority in Bauchi State House of Assembly, demonstrating the conflict between the Hausa/Fulani rulers and the ethnic minority groups within that state. In Sokoto, the support for the NPN was about the same as in the presidential election. In the Yoruba states the same strong support that was shown for the UPN during the presidential election was shown in both the state assembly and gubernatorial elections.² Elections into the senate and the national assembly in Lagos also showed a definite relationship to ethnicity. This is to be expected as the members were elected on the basis of first-past-the post formula in constituencies that were largely ethnically homogeneous or had a majority or large plurality ethnic group.

There was continuity in the voting pattern of the minorities in the Second Republic. They voted for leaders outside of their old regions, just as they were inclined to do in the First Republic until they were coerced by the majority-ruled parties. However, because of the freedom granted them by the new federal system, they could

² Oyeleye Oyediran, "Parties and Politics", in Ukwu I. Ukwu (ed.), *Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 84.

no longer be coerced since they now had bargaining power over the majorities. This allowed political expression of old resentments, in particular against Hausa/Fulani rule by the electorate in Plateau and Benue States, and against the Igbo by the eastern minorities in Rivers and Cross River States. Interestingly, the UPN won much more comprehensive Yoruba support than had the Action Group in the First Republic.

In general, the 1979-83 experiment produced mixed results. It produced a kind of democracy of the rich. Money determined who got nominated and elected into offices. These plutocratic abuses demonstrated that the system was inherently faulty.

The experiment was further handicapped by its newness. Politicians still thought they were working on the old parliamentary model. Some state governors tried to reduce the status of delegates to the National Assembly to that of state delegates in defence of parochial interests. In particular, the experiment was handicapped by parties' assumptions that the election of their members meant the election of the party, and justified their control of representatives' actions and opinions. Divisive tendencies were still strongly present. The striking continuities in the bases and leadership of the political parties to those of the First Republic suggest that a stronger force than constitutional regulations, that is ethnicity, has remained constant in the organisational imperative of mass politics in Nigeria.³ However, the small changes and shifts of groups in party support were of considerable national importance. They helped to take the bite off ethnic politics, removing the possibility of the parties re-aligning on the basis of a north/south dichotomy.

Electoral engineering did not go far enough. It only modified the ethnic bases

³ Lawrence P. Frank, "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism", in *JMAS*, 17, 3 (1979), p. 451.

of the party system. The engineers went to work only on the election of the president.⁴ The presidential electoral formula required national support but elections into the national legislature did not require national support. Ethnic support was sufficient to elect delegates and thus the legislature in Lagos became a forum for the expression of ethnic demands rather than a forum for debate on national issues. The two national level elections thus pulled in two different directions: the presidential election towards nationalism and the national assemblies towards ethnicity.

The constitution framers aimed at producing national parties but they did not succeed. No national party emerged. Even the NPN which had the most national spread had too much of the old NPC in it. President Shagari got himself renominated without the primaries in a farce called a convention and with complete disregard for the party's rotational policy. The proliferation of states made it possible for ethnic minority parties in the old north to control states in that region. This ensured the proliferation of ethnic based parties which is the opposite of the effect intended. Thus the two political innovations, the proliferation of states and the new political system pulled the electoral system in two opposite directions: one towards a multi-ethnic party system, the other towards ethnic parties. However, the experiment did succeed in something which was not intended, that is the preservation of the fluidity of ethnic parties against the danger of North/South divide.

The 1979 election was remarkable by Nigerian standards. It produced what seemed to be a satisfactory result for the operation of the new presidential system and offered encouragement to all parties that they could compete peacefully and benefit

⁴ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 638.

from the system. The results showed a tilt to the party with the most national spread. This entailed the breaking down of some of the old ethnic and regional blocks. All the parties and major ethnic groups enjoyed power through the election of governors in different states unlike in the First Republic where only the ruling party enjoyed power.

The 1983 elections was, however, different. The fundamental urge to power and the distrust it breeds propelled all parties to excesses and those with greater power made greater use of it. Politicians refused to play the game by the rules just like in the First Republic. Rigging and thuggery were the order. These abuses demonstrated that constitutional rationalism could not succeed without the necessary social foundations. Where parties and politicians are determined to win and retain power at all costs, no written constitution can protect democratic institutions. The return of the military three months after that election attests to the fact that constitutional reform and FC are not enough protection against problems caused by political parties and elections in Nigeria.

The conflict that plagues Nigerian politics is to a significant extent the product of the process of class formation.⁵ State power - control over government contracts, jobs, development projects, import licenses and so forth, and the coercive machinery to preserve that control - remains the primary locus of national wealth and the primary arena of class formation.⁶ 'As a result, the premium on political power remains as high as ever and a desperate struggle to win control of state power ensues since this control means for all practical purposes being all powerful and owning everything.'⁷

⁵ Larry Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria*, London, Macmillan, 1988, p. 326.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 327.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 327.

FC IN EDUCATION: UNITY SCHOOLS

FC has caused the most controversy in education. The placement of school children in federal government secondary/grammar schools now known as Unity Schools has been a particularly delicate issue. The idea of establishing Unity Schools is to represent pupils from all the states of the federation in each college in order to promote unity. The schools are meant to foster Nigerian unity by bringing students from all the states of the federation, to live, learn and play together throughout the secondary school course, and to provide the type of education that will help develop in Nigerian youths a sense of unity and patriotism.

During the first civilian administration four unity secondary schools were established, one in each of the four regions. Lagos which was then the Federal Capital Territory, retained the two colleges - Kings and Queens - which were built by the colonial government. With the creation of states in 1967, the number of unity schools increased correspondingly to the new 12-state structure. At the time all the schools were co-educational, excluding Kings and Queens. The disparity between the enrolment of boys and girls was such that the military government decided to increase access to education for girls. In 1972 an all-girls college was established in each of the twelve states. With the subdivision of Nigeria into 19, 21 and 30 states the number of these schools have also been increased.

In 1987 there were 41 unity schools, and 6,000 vacancies available for the year. The number of pupils that qualified for interview was 20,635.⁸ This number was subsequently increased to 24,000 following the decision of the Federal Ministry of Education headed by a northerner, to lower the cut-off mark for two northern states -

⁸ *Daily Times*, Lagos, Friday, August 21, 1987, p. 1.

Bauchi and Borno.⁹ Parents from other states protested against this decision and standards were subsequently lowered for all the states by five percent. Table 2 shows the old and new cut-off points for the interviews.

TABLE 2
CUT-OFF MARKS FOR ADMISSION INTO UNITY SCHOOLS BY STATES

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>FORMER REGION</u> | <u>CUT-OFF MARKS</u> | |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|
| | | <u>OLD</u> | <u>NEW</u> |
| Anambra | East | 310/306 | 305/301 |
| Cross Rivers | East | 281/280 | 276/275 |
| Gongola | North | 291/287 | 286/282 |
| Imo | East | 312/309 | 307/304 |
| Kaduna | North | 255/247 | 251/242 |
| Kano | " | 235/203 | 230/198 |
| Kwara | " | 295/289 | 290/284 |
| Lagos | West | 306/303 | 301/298 |
| Niger | North | 293/281 | 288/276 |
| Ogun | West | 312/311 | 307/306 |
| Ondo | " | 305/300 | 300/295 |
| Oyo | " | 314/309 | 309/304 |
| Plateau | North | 261/256 | 256/245 |
| Rivers | East | 265/263 | 260/258 |
| Sokoto | North | 262/229 | 257/224 |
| Abuja (FCT) | " | 248/223 | 243/218 |
| Bendel | " | 330/315 | 315/301 |
| Bauchi | " | 321/313 | 316/313 |
| Borno | " | 306/300 | 301/295 |
| Benue | " | 272/265 | 267/260 |

Source: Compiled from figures in *Daily Times*, Lagos, Friday, August 21, 1987, pp. 1, 14

On the average, 1,200 pupils attended the interviews from each state. The admission formula was: 50 percent equal state quota, 35 percent area of location and 15 percent merit. The proportion for merit seems to have decreased by five percent since the Second Republic when it was 20 percent with 30 percent for area of location. This suggests that there has been a tilt towards area of location. The balance is

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

therefore now heavily weighted in favour of place and circumstances of birth rather than on merit. This means that children with lower marks are given preference in admission policy whereas those with higher marks are discriminated against because they come from educationally advantaged areas. Issues such as this impose strain on unity.

One major problem is how to determine the state of origin of the children who take the entrance examinations. 'If Chukwuma, son of an Imo State father resident in Maiduguri, was born in Maiduguri and went to the same school with Jibril, also born in Maiduguri of Kanuri parents, and took the examination to a federal government college, does he receive the same treatment as Jibril or has he to score 75 percent to gain entry while Jibril can get it [sic] with 45 percent?'¹⁰

Another major problem is the effect on the children. 'What is the impact on a 12 year old Egba boy born in Kano who having scored 60 percent at an entrance examination, while his Kanawe school mate scored 45 percent, finds that he cannot gain admission while his friend can?'¹¹ At what point in his growing up process does the Kanawe friend realise that the key for success is hard work and excellence and not a given by birth?¹² Unless issues like these are resolved FC is likely to have the opposite effect of entrenching disunity by inculcating in the young ones conflicts and frustration which prevent them from developing loyalty to Nigeria.

¹⁰ Obaro Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", in *Africa Events*, April 1987, p. 41.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 41.

FC IN EDUCATION: UNIVERSITIES

FC in university institutions is concerned with the equitable distribution of student admissions, academic, technical and administrative staff as well as location of universities. Until 1975, there were only six universities in Nigeria. These are the Universities of Ibadan, Nigeria (Nsukka), Ife, Lagos, Benin and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The universities at Ibadan, Nsukka and Zaria had satellite campuses respectively at Jos, Calabar, and Kano. These were up-graded in 1975 to autonomous universities. The federal government then acquired control over all the existing universities and further established four new universities at Ilorin, Maiduguri, Port-Harcourt and Sokoto. In the context of the 12-state structure, this increase satisfied the political aspect of FC but not its geographical aspect.¹³ The restructure of the federation into 19 states in 1976 re-opened the question of imbalance in the geo-political spread of universities with seven states without their own universities. Advocates of FC turned this into a political issue and more federal universities were established. With the creation of more states in 1987, more universities were further established to satisfy FC and more are still being considered to reflect the new 30-state structure.

The result has been the 'over-development' of institutions of higher learning. By 1985, there were 18 federal universities, six state universities and about 60 polytechnic and colleges of education. Total university enrolment soared to about 100,000 students. Today, there are 21 federal, one military and nine state universities in the country. The federal universities at Calabar, Maiduguri, Kano and Sokoto were

¹³ Benoni Briggs, "The University System", in Ukwu I. Ukwu (ed.), *Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 144.

established to enable more people from these areas pursue higher education but those based at Port Harcourt, Jos, Ilorin, Owerri, Akure, Makurdi, Abeokuta, Bauchi, Minna and Yola were all established to satisfy the FC. The unintended consequences of this policy has been a reduction in student mobility, a general lowering of educational standards and a fall in student enrolment.

The application of FC in relation to geographical spread of universities is therefore problematic. It is wasteful and imposes strain on socio-economic planning. This is much more visible in relation to staffing and student enrolment. In the new universities, many science-based courses could not continue because of serious staff shortage. Student enrolment in these universities accordingly fell below the envisaged targets. Student enrolment would have been facilitated if available funds and staff had been fully utilised for the expansion of facilities in the older universities.¹⁴

Theoretically, the admission policy is to make university education accessible to as many people as need to benefit from higher education. This policy is to be balanced between the need for high-level manpower development, the need to maintain academic excellence and the need to reflect FC. The federal government directed the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to waive some of the academic requirements in favour of the educationally disadvantaged states to facilitate the reflection of FC in admissions.

In practice, a quota system in favour of locality is preferred. Each university tends to draw the bulk of its students from states in which they are based or states nearest to their location. For instance, in 1983/84, 1,058 students from Anambra State were placed for first degree courses by JAMB into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka

¹⁴ C.C. Okoye, "The Effective Utilisation of Manpower", in Ukwu I. Ukwu (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 161.

in Anambra. In the same year, 642 students from the neighbouring Imo State, also an Igbo State, were admitted while 114 students from Bendel State (with an Igbo minority) were admitted. In contrast, those states farthest from the location of the university had from only one to 28 students admitted. This pattern of admission is the norm for all the universities (see Tables 3 and 4). Thus the balance is, again, in favour of locality rather than equality of states. In addition, many states impose discriminatory fees for indigens and non-indigens.¹⁵ This has encouraged many non-indigens to bear false names in order to enjoy the benefits granted to indigens. In 1986 many non-indigens who bore false names in Sokoto State were caught when they sought to revert to their real names to register for their final examinations.¹⁶ In the Second Republic, non-indigens of UPN-controlled states of Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Bendel were precluded from enjoying the party's free education programme. Such ethno-state practices promote ethnicity and ethnic xenophobia. The consequence is that it is now possible for some individuals to get all their education without having gone outside their states. This is the opposite of the effect intended.

¹⁵ Eghosa E. Osaghae, "The Problems of Citizenship in Nigeria", in Stephen Olugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Political Futures for Nigeria*, Lagos, Nigerian Political Science Association, 1987, p. 73.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

TABLE 3

University Placements by States for First Degree Courses by JAMB 1983-1984

| <u>State</u> | <u>A.B.U.</u> | <u>F.U.T.</u> <u>Abeokuta</u> | <u>Bayero</u> | <u>Benin</u> | <u>Calabar</u> | <u>Ibadan</u> |
|--------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Anambra | 56 | 7 | 3 | 158 | 217 | 58 |
| Bauchi | 175 | na | 41 | na | na | na |
| Bendel | 88 | 24 | 4 | 1045 | 84 | 301 |
| Benue | 315 | na | 36 | 21 | 27 | 24 |
| Borno | 131 | 1 | 9 | 1 | na | 1 |
| Cross | 47 | 6 | 7 | 42 | 1083 | 72 |
| Gongola | 237 | na | 10 | 1 | na | na |
| Imo | 45 | 27 | 1 | 136 | 460 | 114 |
| Kaduna | 599 | na | 198 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Kano | 204 | 1 | 208 | na | na | na |
| Kwara | 360 | 4 | 20 | 11 | 4 | 148 |
| Lagos | 25 | 15 | 1 | 27 | 16 | 79 |
| Niger | 202 | na | 43 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Ogun | 43 | 77 | na | 32 | 11 | 329 |
| Ondo | 44 | 24 | 2 | 104 | 24 | 423 |
| Oyo | 51 | 43 | 2 | 63 | 20 | 237 |
| Plateau | 221 | na | 6 | na | na | 1 |
| Rivers | 31 | 5 | 1 | 19 | 25 | 28 |
| Sokoto | 107 | na | 21 | na | na | 2 |
| Foreign | 31 | na | 3 | 10 | 8 | 36 |
| Total | 3012 | 234 | 616 | 1672 | 1994 | 2357 |

| <u>State</u> | <u>Ife</u> | <u>Ilorin</u> | <u>Jos</u> | <u>Lagos</u> | <u>Maiduguri</u> | <u>F.U.T.</u> <u>Mekurdi</u> |
|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Anambra | 48 | 35 | 998 | 120 | 38 | 25 |
| Bauchi | 2 | 1 | 35 | 3 | 55 | 1 |
| Bendel | 155 | 38 | 61 | 245 | 12 | 17 |
| Benue | 7 | 44 | 210 | 18 | 27 | 65 |
| Cross | na | na | 6 | 7 | 150 | na |
| Gongola | 40 | 30 | 75 | 37 | 13 | 12 |
| Imo | 1 | 5 | 32 | 1 | 110 | 2 |
| Kaduna | 57 | 38 | 62 | 132 | 18 | 22 |
| Kano | 1 | 2 | 22 | na | 20 | 6 |
| Kwara | 1 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 1 |
| Lagos | 29 | 493 | 34 | 83 | 13 | 4 |
| Niger | 127 | 48 | 16 | 338 | 5 | 4 |
| Ogun | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 2 |
| Ondo | 306 | 85 | 12 | 465 | 11 | 13 |
| Oyo | 539 | 241 | 27 | 394 | 13 | 22 |
| Plateau | 2 | 2 | 194 | 2 | 14 | 4 |
| Rivers | 24 | 9 | 20 | 47 | 6 | 3 |
| Sokoto | 2 | na | 1 | 1 | 4 | na |
| Foreign | 16 | 3 | 10 | 31 | 11 | 6 |
| Total | 2,250 | 1,339 | 925 | 2,360 | 549 | 223 |

| <u>State</u> | <u>F.U.T</u> <u>Owerri</u> | <u>P/Harcourt</u> | <u>Sokoto</u> | <u>U.N.N.</u> | <u>Yola</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Anambra | 23 | 65 | na | 1,058 | 6 | 2,015 |
| Bauchi | na | na | na | 1 | na | 312 |
| Bendel | 14 | 62 | na | 114 | 5 | 2,272 |
| Borno | 2 | 5 | na | 27 | 2 | 852 |
| Cross | na | na | na | 2 | na | 308 |
| Gongola | 12 | 56 | na | 67 | 3 | 1,615 |
| Imo | na | 1 | na | 6 | 6 | 412 |
| Kaduna | 74 | 119 | na | 642 | 13 | 1,960 |
| Kano | na | na | na | 1 | na | 855 |
| Kwara | na | 1 | na | 4 | na | 441 |
| Lagos | 1 | 1 | na | 9 | na | 1,214 |
| Niger | na | 4 | na | 7 | na | 712 |
| Ogun | na | - | na | 2 | na | 284 |
| Ondo | 3 | 3 | na | 9 | na | 1,398 |
| Oyo | 5 | 8 | na | 28 | 1 | 1,899 |
| Plateau | 5 | 5 | na | 24 | 2 | 2,533 |
| Rivers | na | 1 | na | 4 | 2 | 463 |
| Sokoto | 1 | 237 | na | 29 | na | 138 |
| Foreign | 1 | 3 | na | 15 | na | 184 |
| Total | 141 | 571 | | 2,049 | 43 | 20,335 |

TABLE 4
Applications to JAMB for First Degree Courses 1984-1985

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>A.B.U.</u> | <u>AKURE</u> | <u>ANAMBRA</u> | <u>BAYERO</u> | <u>BENIN</u> | <u>CALABAR</u> |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Anambra | 412 | 11 | 179 | 22 | 3417 | 1871 |
| Bauchi | 529 | 3 | - | 99 | 27 | 17 |
| Bendel | 542 | 40 | 3 | 32 | 15493 | 753 |
| Benue | 868 | 10 | - | 66 | 289 | 295 |
| Borno | 282 | 1 | - | 57 | 13 | 1 |
| Cross | 318 | 12 | 4 | 27 | 698 | 4590 |
| Gongola | 518 | 2 | 1 | 24 | 23 | 5 |
| Imo | 490 | 19 | 65 | 19 | 3664 | 3701 |
| Kaduna | 1432 | 1 | - | 370 | 30 | 11 |
| Kano | 439 | - | - | 453 | 19 | 4 |
| Kwara | 1257 | 13 | - | 84 | 344 | 53 |
| Lagos | 132 | 9 | - | 10 | 714 | 113 |
| Niger | 432 | 1 | - | 73 | 36 | 10 |
| Ogun | 247 | 40 | 4 | 12 | 1866 | 196 |
| Ondo | 302 | 96 | 1 | 13 | 2506 | 252 |
| Oyo | 385 | 58 | - | 21 | 1951 | 213 |
| Plateau | 709 | 2 | - | 27 | 31 | 27 |
| Rivers | 196 | 5 | 1 | 12 | 522 | 528 |
| Sokoto | 261 | - | - | 33 | 12 | 2 |
| Foreign | 120 | - | - | 7 | 68 | 41 |
| Total | 9866 | 323 | 258 | 1461 | 31723 | 12584 |

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>IBADAN</u> | <u>IFE</u> | <u>ILORIN</u> | <u>IMO</u> | <u>JOS</u> | <u>LAGOS</u> |
|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Anambra | 402 | 1023 | 498 | 496 | 1994 | 878 |
| Bauchi | 24 | 125 | 24 | - | 214 | 17 |
| Bendel | 1162 | 2110 | 818 | 26 | 1013 | 745 |
| Benue | 168 | 172 | 220 | - | 1323 | 132 |
| Borno | 304 | 421 | 190 | 14 | 506 | 478 |
| Cross | 35 | 18 | 32 | 1 | 199 | 20 |
| Gongola | 772 | 1629 | 643 | 5569 | 2201 | 1492 |
| Imo | 30 | 46 | 35 | 1 | 244 | 26 |
| Kaduna | 13 | 7 | 22 | - | 82 | 25 |
| Kano | 636 | 622 | 4026 | 2 | 490 | 533 |
| Kwara | 405 | 1558 | 660 | 8 | 311 | 2211 |
| Lagos | 31 | 17 | 66 | - | 148 | 20 |
| Niger | 1768 | 4445 | 1703 | 12 | 619 | 3387 |
| Ogun | 1500 | 4905 | 2268 | 4 | 508 | 2170 |
| Ondo | 3731 | 10305 | 3713 | 8 | 688 | 2987 |
| Oyo | 38 | 51 | 34 | - | 1011 | 14 |
| Plateau | 133 | 371 | 139 | 23 | 161 | 258 |
| Rivers | 16 | 27 | 39 | - | 122 | 16 |
| Sokoto | 175 | 95 | 35 | 1 | 70 | 128 |
| Foreign | 175 | 95 | 35 | 1 | 7 | 47 |
| Total | 11365 | 27810 | 15184 | 6165 | 121782 | 15551 |

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>MAIDUGURI</u> | <u>MINNA</u> | <u>P./H.</u> | <u>SOKOTO</u> | <u>U.N.N.</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Anambra | 1093 | 9 | 1164 | 22 | 12823 | 26314 |
| Bauchi | 321 | - | 1 | 29 | 28 | 1358 |
| Bendel | 734 | 4 | 809 | 15 | 1890 | 26189 |
| Benue | 531 | 2 | 77 | 49 | 253 | 4355 |
| Borno | 668 | - | - | 8 | 16 | 1180 |
| Cross | 361 | 3 | 549 | 27 | 764 | 9266 |
| Gongola | 422 | - | 2 | 21 | 52 | 1375 |
| Imo | 1631 | 4 | 2083 | 14 | 9742 | 33738 |
| Kaduna | 160 | 1 | 4 | 135 | 45 | 2571 |
| Kano | 115 | - | 3 | 35 | 17 | 1234 |
| Kwara | 364 | 2 | 35 | 72 | 193 | 8728 |
| Lagos | 285 | - | 55 | 8 | 359 | 6838 |
| Niger | 122 | 5 | 8 | 122 | 27 | 1113 |
| Ogun | 546 | 2 | 81 | 13 | 893 | 15835 |
| Ondo | 391 | - | 88 | 8 | 877 | 15889 |
| Oyo | 481 | 1 | 83 | 22 | 947 | 25594 |
| Plateau | 217 | - | 12 | 24 | 57 | 2454 |
| Rivers | 283 | 1 | 4121 | 12 | 454 | 7370 |
| Sokoto | 181 | 5 | - | 279 | 14 | 1007 |
| Foreign | 47 | 1 | 19 | 7 | 85 | 899 |
| Total | 8953 | 40 | 9194 | 922 | 29536 | 193107 |

na: figures not available. Source: Federal Office of Statistics, *Annual Abstract of Statistics 1986*, pp. 97-98.

FC AND REVENUE ALLOCATION

Revenue sharing has been the dominant method used to deal with the financial needs of the states. The issue of criteria for revenue allocation from the federated account to the states has been one of the most intractable in the Nigerian unity process. The Okigbo Commission established in 1980 was the eighth in 35 years to try and devise a fair and national system. There have been a few more attempts since then. Until the mid-1960's when the revenue from petroleum increased sharply, federal finance in Nigeria was predominantly perceived as a horizontal fiscal balance among the regional governments. The principle of derivation was elevated to the virtual exclusion of others which included balanced growth, population, and needs. This increased imbalances between regions. Besides, there was more money for the regional governments than for the federal government. Since the regions got the revenues derived from them as of statutory right, there was only a little revenue, largely from particular taxes, available to the federal government for sharing via the Distributable Pool Account (DPA). The principle of derivation therefore greatly helped to undermine the federal government and weaken its authority and influence.

The period from 1952 to 1956 demonstrated the serious negative implications of heavy reliance on derivation for national unity and stability. Regional interest overrode national interest. Each regional government accepted only those principles of revenue sharing which were most beneficial to itself. The governments of Northern and Western Regions favoured the principle of derivation from 1946 to after 1960, because groundnuts (from the North) and cocoa (from the West) were the dominant sources of export revenue. With the increase in petroleum revenues from 1958 and the realisation that there was little prospect of oil being found in these Regions, the

two governments reversed their stance on derivation. When it became apparent that they wished to change the 'rules of the game' the Eastern Region moved toward secession.¹⁷

After the war, the military introduced the principle of equality for sharing 50 percent of the federation account and 50 percent based on other criteria. The two oil states, Rivers and Bendel, received a disproportionately large share of the revenues on the basis of derivation and became the envy of the other states. The formula was then amended to 50 percent on the basis of equality and 50 percent on the basis of relative population of states.

The federal government acquired effective control of the off-share oil revenue by 1971. This removed the possibility that the major and fastest growing source of revenues might be allocated to states on the basis of derivation. By 1975 a revised revenue sharing system further reduced the importance of derivation. This was indicated by a few changes. For example, all revenue from import duties on motor fuel and tobacco was to go to the DPA instead of to the state where consumption occurred. All export duty revenue from produce, hides and skins was to go to the DPA instead of to the state of production. 80 percent of on-shore mining rents and royalties was to go to the DPA instead of the previous 50 percent. The share to the state of derivation was decreased from 45 percent to 20 percent.¹⁸ In addition all mining rents and royalties from off-share production were to go to the DPA rather than being exclusive to the federal government.¹⁹

¹⁷ Lawrence A. Rupley, "Revenue Sharing in the Nigerian Federation", in *JMAS*, 19, 2 (1981), p. 261.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 266.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 266.

The revenue sharing system adopted in 1979 relied relatively less on geographic derivation and more on equality of states. In October, 1979 after the resumption of civil rule, a Presidential Commission on Revenue allocation under the chairmanship of Dr. Pius Okigbo was appointed to consider revenue sharing criteria such as derivation, population, national coherence, even development, equitable distribution and equality of states. The commission recommended as follows for the share out of the DPA:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| population | 40% |
| minimum responsibility | 40% |
| primary-school enrolment | 15% |
| revenue collected by state | 5% |

Derivation was therefore further decreased while equality and population were elevated. The federal government, however, makes sectoral allocations on the basis of 50 percent equality and 50 percent population among states.²⁰

The decreased reliance on derivation since the 1970s is a desirable development for Nigerian unity. Heavy reliance on the principle has been an important cause of imbalances between state governments and between the state and federal governments. A revenue weak central government cannot effectively intervene to prevent instability and disintegration if its component parts are financially so strong that they can challenge its authority.

A major consequence of the new revenue allocation policy is that it emphasises cross-group interests. The biggest and poorest states favour a heavier emphasis on population and equality whereas the oil producers resent the reduction of their share

²⁰ J.I. Elaigwu, "The Military and State Building: Federal-State Relations in Nigeria's 'Military Federalism' 1966-1976", in Akinyemi et al., *Readings in Federalism*, Lagos, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979, p. 178.

as a result of the de-emphasis on derivation. The oil states claim that federal funds are being used to develop other parts of the federation at their own expense and consequently demand that more states be created from them.²¹ The use of equality and population as bases for allocation has therefore created incentives for political actors to see a few all-Nigeria level issues in terms of competition among states rather than among ethnic groups. During the Second Republic, Governors of the five oil states, belonging to three rival political parties - two UPN, Two NPN, and one NPP - bridged the bitter political divisions between their parties to unite on a common position over revenue allocation. Together they took the NPN-controlled federal government to court over their share of the federated funds, demonstrating that the new Nigerian federal structure has the capacity to impose truly fresh sources of cleavage. However, the emphasis on population puts a strain on unity as it tends to make census taking a very sensitive and volatile issue.

FC AND CABINET APPOINTMENTS

Section 135 of the constitution enjoins the president to reflect FC in his ministerial appointments. To this effect he should appoint at least one minister from each state, who should be an indigen of such state. This is to eliminate the consequences of winner-take-all behaviour inherent in First Republican politics. The federal cabinet in 1965 comprised 13 ministers from the north and four from the south.²² Appendix IV-VII shows the distribution of ministerial appointments by state

²¹ See for instance, *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, Saturday, August 22, 1987 p. 7, and also, "Statement by Concerned Indigens of the Proposed Aniom State", *National Concord*, Lagos, Friday August 21, 1987, p. 16.

²² *Concord Weekly*, 28 January 1985, p. 8.

and Region under three different regimes. The ethnic groups of the appointees are stated where known.

Analysis of ministerial appointments since independence show that certain ministries like defence and internal affairs have gone to northerners. To a lesser extent the ministry of trade and industry have also been the exclusive preserve of northerners except under Obasanjo when two Yoruba men from Kwara State held the portfolio. However, in the Second Republic when import licences became a crucial element of Nigeria's economic activities no southerner held the trade portfolio.²³ Southerners have also had their areas of monopoly. These are the ministries of justice, information and labour.

The pattern of distribution shows that sectors emphasized by the incumbent regime as key sectors tend to go to 'kinsmen' of the man in power. In short, heads of state have tended to put their own men in ministries where there is money to be 'chopped'. During the Obasanjo regime when the emphasis was on the new federal capital and agriculture, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), both portfolios went to Yoruba men. Obasanjo's appointment of a Yoruba man (from Lagos) as minister in-charge of the Federal Capital Territory was resented by some northerners who saw it as a conspiracy against the north.²⁴ During the Shagari era, in addition to defence and internal affairs, the key ministries of agriculture (Shagari's Green Revolution) and the federal territory went to Hausa/Fulanis.

President Shagari in keeping with the constitution appointed at least one minister from each of the states. However, six states - Sokoto, Benue, Bauchi,

²³ Obaro Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", op. cit., p. 40.

²⁴ A.M. Mainasara, "Obasanjo's Northern Phobia", *Hotline*, Kaduna, No. 11, March 31, 1987, p. 22.

Kaduna, Rivers and Cross Rivers, - had three ministers each. Benue, Rivers and Cross Rivers were the minority states that enabled Shagari to win the presidency. Sokoto is Shagari's home state. Bauchi and Kaduna states have core Fulani population. Ten other states had two ministers each and Plateau and Ondo states where he got the least number of votes had one minister each. In his second term in office, the size of the cabinet was smaller than in the first term and there was a more consistent attempt to reflect FC. However, key ministries were again reserved for kinsmen.

FC tends to be overlooked by the military. When they do apply it, it is at the pleasure of the man in power and his cronies. For instance in 1987 Babangida appointed key members of his cabinet from the Langtang Local Government of Plateau State. The population of Langtang is approximately 30,000. The prominence of such a minority group gave rise to their being described by the press as the 'Langtang Mafia'.²⁵

Similarly, the appointment of state governors has depended on the pleasure of President Babangida rather than on FC. For instance, Benue State had six governors in four years of military rule. Five of them were appointed by Babangida. Yohanna Madaki, one of the five was in office for barely three weeks and Idris Garba for seven months. These exigencies of military rule 'have the undesirable effect of helping to reinforce the collective belief that public office is a basket of ripe fruits' and 'every so often, new people must be allowed their presumed access to it'.²⁶

In general, appointments are manipulated so that members of one sectional

²⁵ *Newswatch*, Lagos, January 22, 1990, p. 15.

²⁶ *Newswatch*, August 8, 1988, p. 4.

group occupy key posts. This is the case at both state and federal levels. For example, in Rivers State members of the majority Ijaw group occupied the posts of state governor, speaker of the state assembly, and chief justice, thus controlling all three branches of government.²⁷ In Anambra State, the governor, the secretary to the government, and chairman of the civil service commission were all from the same village group.²⁸ In 1987, at the federal ministry of education, the minister, the permanent secretary, the director of education, the chairman of national universities commission and the executive secretary of that commission were all northerners despite the principle of FC.²⁹

There is no formula for checking on how equitable of ethnic origin state representation is at federal level. The federal authorities are content once it can be shown that there is some sort of state representation. The result is that within each state there are ethnic groups that are consistently alienated in federal appointments or else they are considered when the positions are peripheral to power. Conversely, some ethnic groups are consistently over-represented in powerful federal appointments. For instance, the Fulanis who are scattered all over the northern states seem to get a disproportionate share of these appointments.

The application of FC in positions of influence can, at best, only produce and perpetuate a segmental nationalism of the privileged classes. These classes alone stand to benefit from the policy which has been primarily used to balance the narrowly-defined interests of the various factions of the country's elites. Besides, the policy

²⁷ F.J. Ellah, *Nigeria and States Creation*, Port Harcourt, Chief J.W.Ellah, Sons & Co., 1983, p. 74.

²⁸ James O. Ojiako, *First Four Years of Nigeria's Executive Presidency: Success or Failure*, Onitsha, Africana Educational Publishers, 1983, pp. 59-61.

²⁹ Ikime, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

tends to perpetuate the disconcerting image that those elites appointed to positions of power are there to represent their states or places of origin. The logic being that once they have secured access to power by FC they could only maintain that power by working to the benefit of the indigens of their state. In that way, it facilitates and entrenches elite manipulation of ethnicity. As a result, the elite remain divided on ethnic lines despite their common political and socio-economic interests.

FC AND THE CIVIL SERVICE

FC in the federal civil service entails the reservation of all new vacancies for some sectional groups which are under-represented in federal institutions. Officers in the service of under-represented states are then transferred to the vacant federal positions. These transfers are horizontal, that is from grade at state level to the equivalent federal level. The transfers occur at all grade levels but the optimum levels are the entry grade levels 08-09, and the training grade levels 12-13 for senior management. In the professional cadres FC entails the filling of available vacancies with people from under-represented areas. Furthermore, at least one permanent secretary must be appointed from each state. No one state or group of states should have a monopoly of the permanent secretary posts. Promotions to key administrative positions in the service, that is grade levels 15-17 are based on the pattern of distribution of staff by states. Merit is only considered when there are surplus positions after the interests of all the states have been satisfied.³⁰

The application of FC in the federal service has been one of the most divisive issues in Nigeria. It has fostered disaffection at both group and individual levels.

³⁰ Okoye, "The Effective Utilisation of Manpower", *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Persons who have lower qualifications, less experience, and less expertise have, because they come from areas regarded as deprived or disadvantaged areas, been appointed to positions in which they boss those with superior educational qualification and more experience. This breeds frustration in the better qualified. Transfers from states that are educationally disadvantaged is not only causing disaffection and resentment in the educationally advanced states but also in disadvantaged areas. Officers from the latter areas who rose through the normal procedure, but joined the federal service at the beginning of their career, become subordinated to their juniors who transferred or were seconded from their own states of origin. This tends to lend credence to claims that FC is promoting disunity, reverse domination and corruption. But such abuse of FC has been more at the state rather than at the federal level. For example, in 1979 the governor of Anambra State appointed 18 new permanent secretaries in addition to the existing 15. Fourteen of the new secretaries were from the more backward northern parts of the state. Most of them were young and inexperienced. The exercise was painful for the deputy permanent secretaries and other top senior civil servants who had served the state faithfully for many years.³¹ It encouraged the overdevelopment of the state bureaucracy, exerting pressure on the already poor resources of the state.

The controversy over the application of the FC in the federal service has divided the country into northerners and southerners. Northerners campaign for it while southerners campaign against it:

To those from the northern parts of the country (along with citizens of

³¹ Ojiako, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

Rivers and Cross River States) federal character is synonymous with quota system and means therefore a proportional absorption into federal institutions and establishments. To those from the southern parts of the country, it means an attempt by the "North" to infiltrate into areas which they hitherto regarded as "theirs" by right.³²

The major reason why southerners are against FC is that its application in the civil service would help the Hausa/Fulani to consolidate power by fusing bureaucratic and political power.³³ There is presently a quasi kind of equity in the distribution and balance of political and bureaucratic power between the north and the south. There are more administrative officers from the southern states in the federal civil service than there are from the northern states. In so far as the three major ethnic groups are concerned, the Yoruba are the most represented followed by the Igbo. The Igbo lost their first position to the Yoruba as a result of the civil war. The least represented is the Hausa/Fulani group. The minority ethnic groups are more represented than the Hausa/Fulani.³⁴ Thus the group that controls political power, and also benefits most from government allocation of resources is the least represented in the federal service. Northerners accuse southerners of deliberately keeping them away from the federal service.³⁵ Southerners counter that it is inconceivable that they could keep northerners away without the anomaly being corrected given the northern bias of

³² *Hotline*, April 15, 1987, p. 13.

³³ Bola Dauda, *Federal Character and the Bureaucracy in Nigeria*, Ph.D. Thesis, Liverpool, University of Liverpool, 1988, p. 365.

³⁴ See appendix V for ethnic staffing of some federal corporations.

³⁵ See for instance the *New Nigerian*, December 17, 1984, p. 1.

leadership at the Federal Public Service Commission and the central government. What is clear is that diminishing opportunities in the north has made the federal service attractive to northern graduates who in the past preferred employment with their state governments.³⁶

FC in the federal civil service imposes strain on unity. It has introduced dysfunctional factors into the present discursive equation in the balance of power between the north and south. Southern domination of the bureaucracy is a form of insurance against northern control of political power. The removal of this insurance can lead to a negative reaction from the south.

The mixed reactions to FC demonstrate that political engineering may undermine ethnicity in some circumstances and exacerbate it in others. It tends to emphasise cross-group interests in some circumstances such as in party politics and elections, revenue allocation and even cabinet appointments while in school and university admissions and in federal service recruitment and promotions it tends to emphasise ethnic identities. There is a certain irony that the need to reflect FC in university intake of students and the appointment of teaching staff has made some of the universities less national and more particularistic than they were during the First Republic when two-thirds of them were statutorily non-federal institutions.³⁷

FC has tended to increase corruption and chaos, both of which are already endemic in the society. It has been largely used to balance the narrowly-defined

³⁶ *Concord Weekly*, 28 January, 1985, p. 8.

³⁷ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "Ethnic Engineering and the 'Federal Character' of Nigeria: Boon of Contentment or Bone of Contention?", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, October 1983, p. 469.

interests of the various factions of the country's ruling elites. It is too expensive and puts a strain on Nigeria's already impoverished economy. The full extension of the principle to all major national institutions would generate a greater threat to the efficacy, and hence, the stability of the federation.

However, FC promises the long term advantage of engendering national loyalty. Its explicit acknowledgement of the essentially plural nature of the country is an improvement on the practice during the 1960s. The covert application of the quota system by the Hausa/Fulani controlled government for the benefit of the group was a deep source of tension and frustration in the First Republic. The concept of FC is accepted by many Nigerians as good. It is only its method of application that is disputed. This is the dilemma for ethnic arithmetic in Nigeria: whether it can be applied without prejudice to the criteria of merit, justice, excellence and achievement, or without converting present historical disadvantages into permanent advantages. On the other hand, Nigeria cannot afford to meet the principles of equity and balance which is inherent in the logic of FC. This would mean putting lesser sectional loyalties above the greater loyalty to the nation. It is however curious that there is no official agency, such as an equal opportunities commission, to monitor the application of FC. The establishment of a similar organization would help to mitigate the negative effects of the policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Introduction

Socialization is generally regarded as the main key to nation-building. According to Gellner, it is the means by which state and culture are linked to bring about key traits of nationalism, that is homogeneity, literacy, anonymity.¹ It consists of planned attempts to undermine local and sectional loyalties and replace them with an overriding sense of nationalism. This is achieved mainly through the educational system.

Socialization institutions in Nigeria have included both modern and traditional institutions. The federal government has used not only modern social institutions, such as the school system and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), but also traditional institutions, notably traditional rulership. Although the Nigerian nation and its nationalist ideology are themselves eminently modern institutions, successive military heads of state have recognized the crucial role of ethnically-based rulership in constructing a national identity, describing such traditional rulers as 'fathers of the nation' or 'highways to unity'. They have at the same time kept traditional rulers in line with redundant powers.² Ethnicity has thus been utilized as a resource by military nation-builders to promote their ideological and political objectives. This is so even though a traditional ruler does not generally have jurisdiction over the whole of an ethnic group, his domain being merely a part of it. He is nevertheless often seen as

¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. 138.

² The 1977 local government reforms effectively stripped them of any real power.

holding a key position in matters concerning ethnicity.³ His position as king of his people is an approved one of brokerage between government and the people since it is sanctioned by government.

Nationalism in Nigeria appeals to this traditional feature of the society because the society is not yet a literate one. The vast majority of Nigerians including the literate are still traditional in their approach to life and believe in traditional leadership. The political and military elite that have ruled Nigeria know that if they get the allegiance of traditional rulers, 'the fathers of their people', they get the people.⁴ They therefore rationally use the institution to legitimate their rule. The military nation-builders, like the colonial administrators, have re-established traditional rulership in areas where it had disappeared and political, bureaucratic and military elites have been initiated into the institution by their assumption of chieftaincy titles from traditional rulers. The Nigerian experience thus controverts the functionalist claim that nation-building is inherently hostile to traditional culture. Such analyses retard the understanding of the transformative as well as legitimating potentials of tradition in the process of nation-building.

In the rest of this chapter, I shall concentrate on socialization through the educational system and the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), an institution established by government to foster nationalism.

³ Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Shaneson Limited, 1990, p. 130.

⁴ Saburi Biobaku, "Political Leadership and National Development: Traditional Leaders and their Contemporary Relevance", in Eniola O. Adeniyi and Sunday O. Titilola (eds.), *Leadership and National Development: Proceedings of a National Conference*, Ibadan, NISER, 1985, p. 20.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The federal government's belief in the production of a homogeneous society through education is absolutely expressed in the Second and Third National Development Plans. The 1979 Constitution further underscored the idea, stipulating that the state should ensure that there are equal and adequate opportunities at all levels of education for all Nigerians. The idea that the provision of education for all would unify the country has its origins in the belief that the problem of disunity is partly the result of the educational imbalance between the north and the south.

This imbalance is a real problem for Nigeria. In 1975 students from three southern States viz, the West, Mid-West and East Central States, made up 65 percent of the total student body in the six federal universities then in existence.⁵ Western European education became rooted in southern Nigeria because the Christian missions were not initially allowed to operate in the Muslim areas. The British administration had pledged to the Fulani rulers that they would protect Islamic practice in those areas. By the time these areas were opened up to western influence the southerners were already ahead of their northern counterparts in education and technological progress.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) adopted in 1974 was the first comprehensive attempt to address the country's educational problems.⁶ To promote unity, the policy advocated the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels and the development of an

⁵ Sanya Onabamiro, "Education in Nigeria since Independence", in M.O. Kayode and Y.B. Usman (eds.), *The Economic and Social Development of Nigeria: Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence, Vol. II, March, 1983*, Zaria, Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project, 1985, p. 221.

⁶ This policy was later reformulated in 1977 and revised in 1981.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS BY STATE

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>19-80/81</u> | <u>81/82</u> | <u>82/83</u> | <u>83/84</u> | <u>84/85</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| ANAMBRA | 983274 | 1005467 | 853452 | 838470 | 928738 |
| BAUCHI | 394703 | 370349 | 434153 | 326472 | 284120 |
| BENDEL | 878951 | 818975 | 859922 | 927708 | 878640 |
| BENUE | 881183 | 903213 | 975720 | 953568 | 441641 |
| BORNO | 388230 | 397451 | 404320 | 445999 | 444360 |
| CR.RIVER | 808825 | 835827 | 868484 | 872370 | 845745 |
| GONGOLA | 486943 | 521119 | 470198 | 518369 | 359552 |
| IMO | 1183000 | 854836 | 826584 | 793867 | 849703 |
| KADUNA | 1015177 | 1060196 | 1070459 | 1134475 | 1284548 |
| KANO | 1026430 | 1200342 | 1214920 | 752278 | 762593 |
| KWARA | 740247 | 591340 | 620907 | 865972 | 882864 |
| LAGOS | 522236 | 565190 | 570921 | 637778 | 650937 |
| NIGER | 419076 | 426167 | 450765 | 462034 | 460182 |
| OGUN | 353495 | 400522 | 426294 | 445168 | 359515 |
| ONDO | 628939 | 674128 | 691898 | 693997 | 567612 |
| OYO | 1463516 | 1877880 | 1971774 | 1070362 | 182525 |
| PLATEAU | 526039 | 600892 | 565020 | 524305 | 545502 |
| RIVERS | 495337 | 513731 | 585238 | 369363 | 320935 |
| SOKOTO | 564129 | 644657 | 684030 | 705777 | 717898 |
| FCT ABUJA NA | | 23155 | 29462 | 45155 | 45155 |
| TOTAL | 13760030 | 14285437 | 14524523 | 14383487 | 13612765 |

Source: Federal Ministry of Education.¹⁰ NA: not available

The National Pledge of Loyalty was introduced along with the UPE. Children in primary and secondary schools were to make the pledge at the beginning and at the end of every school day and at every major assembly or congregation. Also the nation symbolized by the hoisted National Flag is to be saluted every morning by pupils in primary and secondary schools and the National Anthem sung at the same time.¹¹ It is difficult to assess the extent to which the recitation of the Pledge or the salute to

¹⁰ *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos, 1986, p. 85.

¹¹ See Appendix I for the National Pledge of Loyalty, the National Anthem and the National Colours.

building but it has only produced a minority of segmental national elites.

The UPE scheme has been plagued with immense logistical problems from its inception. These include the underestimation of enrollment and of financing, and the shortage of qualified teachers. Considering the country's poor economic conditions, UPE is unlikely to be provided free and compulsory as was originally planned. In fact, by 1978 parents' contribution to the scheme had become necessary because of the inability of government to meet the financial requirements involved. This belies the reference to it as free.

A major psychological problem for the scheme is how to change parental attitudes. Because rural people in the Muslim areas of the north regard western education as conversion to Christianity, they tend to hide their children from registration.¹³ A survey of parents in Niger State showed that over half of those interviewed favoured sending some of their children to school, while keeping some at home to help with everyday work and to ensure that the traditional way of life on the farm would continue.¹⁴ In both farming and trading communities sending a child to school was perceived as a loss of income. The children of the *Bororoje*, nomadic Fulani, also present a problem. Of the 150 *Bororoje* parents interviewed none had children at school.¹⁵ Many of them had not heard of the scheme and they wanted their children to be educated only in the traditional ways of nomadic life. Furthermore,

¹³ A. Mohammed, "The Problems that are facing UPE Scheme in Gumel Local Government", M.A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, 1979, cited in Marg Csapo, "Universal Primary education in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁴ S. Abara, "Attitudes of Nigerian Parents Towards Western Education and U.P.E.: A Case Study of Gussoro", M.A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1979, cited in Csapo, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁵ C. Tabwassa, "A Survey of the Attitudes of the Nomadic Fulani Parents toward the Universal Primary Education Scheme in Song Local Government area in Gongola State", M.A. Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1977, cited in Csapo, op. cit., p. 101.

education of females is perceived as a threat to traditional way of life and to Koranic teachings.¹⁶ UPE, without addressing these problems, is unlikely to reduce substantively the inequalities in educational advancement between the north and the south.

The scheme has, however, one major advantage for nation-building. It has made education accessible to a greater number of people. The fact, that depending on the region of the country, 60-95 percent of the children enrolled under the scheme came from families with no previous school experience makes children pioneers in the creation of a new Nigeria.¹⁷

At the secondary and tertiary levels of education, the NPE advocated the institution of student mobility schemes to promote better understanding among the ethnic groups. To achieve this, the idea of 'unity schools' were recommended. This entails the institution of student exchange programmes in state schools. In other words, a state would invite children from other states to attend its secondary schools. So far, only the federal government has established unity schools. If the idea is to be achieved, it has to be practiced at all levels of government from the community to the local government through the state government to the federal government level. It is not enough for the federal government to implement the policy while state governments which control the bulk of the educational institutions at the secondary level are left to their own devices. In 1978/79 school year, for example, the federal government owned 75 out of about 38,000 educational institutions in Nigeria. In the same year, out of a total enrollment of thirteen million Nigerian students only thirty two

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

¹⁷ Csapo, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

thousand were enrolled in federal institutions.¹⁸

At the university level, a number of tactics of socialization were designed. New universities were to be established in educationally backward areas to rectify the problem posed by the uneven development of educational institutions. To this effect the universities of Maiduguri, Calabar, Sokoto and Kano were established in 1975. New students were to be encouraged to go to universities outside of their home state. Admission procedure for students seeking to enter universities outside of their home state was to be made easier. This was to be made possible by the application of the federal character principle. However, the application of federal character in the location of new universities has had the opposite effect of reducing student mobility. All first-year undergraduates are required to take a course in the social organization, customs, culture, and history of the various peoples of Nigeria. In addition, graduates of institutions of higher learning are required to spend a compulsory year of national service in states other than their own to develop common ties among the youth and provide opportunities for them to learn about the needs and ways of life of Nigerians in other parts of the country. This requirement for national service embodies quite a pessimistic view of the effects of higher education or rather its non-effects.¹⁹ It suggests that the government does not entirely trust the university system to foster unity. However, as it is now increasingly possible for one to obtain all his formal education, even up to doctoral level, without leaving his state of origin (and thus without interacting with a large number of other Nigerians), the one year national

¹⁸ J.S. Attah, "National Education Policy", in Ukwu I. Ukwu (ed.), *Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria*, Kuru, Nigeria, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, 1987, p. 137.

¹⁹ Otwin Marenin, "National Service and National Consciousness in Nigeria", in *JMAS*, 17, 4, 1979, P. 641.

service makes a major contribution to Nigerian unity.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NYSC)

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme is designed as a broker institution for nationalism.²⁰ Its major objectives are to endow Nigerian youths with a spirit of selfless service to the nation, to emphasize the spirit of oneness of all Nigerians, and to build a united and prosperous nation. At its inception in 1974 it included only those graduates of Nigerian universities under the age of thirty. It excluded the medically unfit, members of the armed forces and the police, and part-time students already in employment. Graduates of law, medicine, pharmacy and engineering and those recommended by their Vice-Chancellors could defer their service year for a maximum of three years. The scheme was expanded in 1976 to include the over 30s, graduates from the polytechnic and advanced teacher training colleges, and Nigerian graduates from overseas institutions. This resulted in a massive increase of enrollment from its initial 2,400 in 1974/75 to 6,107 in 1976/77. By 1984/85 total enrollment was 42,530 (see Table 2).

²⁰ Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Official Gazette* (Lagos), Decree No. 24 of May 23, 1973. See also Directorate Headquarters, *Act and Amendments*, NYSC, Lagos.

TABLE 2
NYSO DEPLOYMENT OF CORPERS BY STATE AND SEX

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>1976/77</u> | | <u>1977/78</u> | | <u>1978/79</u> | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> |
| ANAMBRA | 240 | 52 | 469 | 117 | 579 | 189 |
| BAUCHI | 198 | 35 | 353 | 37 | 486 | 81 |
| BENDEL | 324 | 92 | 616 | 103 | 768 | 216 |
| BENUE | 211 | 37 | 375 | 51 | 542 | 98 |
| BORNO | 217 | 24 | 377 | 42 | 484 | 94 |
| CR. RIVER | 274 | 25 | 466 | 82 | 558 | 160 |
| GONGOLA | 224 | 14 | 367 | 46 | 424 | 94 |
| IMO | 193 | 29 | 435 | 93 | 582 | 145 |
| KADUNA | 329 | 75 | 508 | 122 | 761 | 234 |
| KANO | 267 | 128 | 457 | 114 | 663 | 265 |
| KWARA | 309 | 68 | 532 | 135 | 735 | 187 |
| LAGOS | 502 | 168 | 686 | 230 | 1150 | 825 |
| NIGER | 201 | 33 | 431 | 70 | 473 | 107 |
| OGUN | 222 | 40 | 527 | 77 | 683 | 91 |
| ONDO | 219 | 48 | 490 | 110 | 717 | 116 |
| OYO | 312 | 108 | 596 | 201 | 819 | 296 |
| PLATEAU | 263 | 57 | 471 | 117 | 560 | 193 |
| RIVERS | 278 | 40 | 422 | 58 | 544 | 102 |
| SOKOTO | 220 | 31 | 366 | 65 | 506 | 106 |
| TOTAL | 5003 | 1104 | 8944 | 1870 | 12033 | 3599 |

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>1979/80</u> | | <u>1980/81</u> | | <u>1981/82</u> | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> | <u>MALE</u> | <u>FEMALE</u> |
| ANAMBRA | 731 | 226 | 893 | 316 | 971 | 375 |
| BAUCHI | 448 | 182 | 793 | 102 | 815 | 174 |
| BENDEL | 827 | 245 | 1035 | 345 | 1156 | 400 |
| BENUE | 682 | 153 | 817 | 175 | 734 | 182 |
| BORNO | 600 | 77 | 721 | 107 | 722 | 158 |
| CR. RIVER | 558 | 96 | 799 | 233 | 777 | 241 |
| GONGOLA | 561 | 64 | 604 | 98 | 655 | 118 |
| IMO | 832 | 169 | 865 | 184 | 846 | 312 |
| KADUNA | 854 | 339 | 945 | 404 | 947 | 232 |
| KANO | 1055 | 291 | 888 | 370 | 1119 | 232 |
| KWARA | 702 | 210 | 1145 | 354 | 1320 | 388 |
| LAGOS | 1529 | 619 | 1572 | 944 | 2275 | 1165 |
| NIGER | 537 | 113 | 772 | 98 | 710 | 248 |
| OGUN | 928 | 127 | 1011 | 194 | 1086 | 249 |
| ONDO | 769 | 155 | 1038 | 211 | 1133 | 286 |
| OYO | 1069 | 407 | 1562 | 504 | 1905 | 752 |
| PLATEAU | 717 | 137 | 708 | 304 | 1247 | 348 |
| RIVERS | 773 | 142 | 920 | 198 | 1228 | 281 |
| SOKOTO | 588 | 88 | 734 | 76 | 863 | 176 |
| TOTAL | 14789 | 3840 | 17822 | 5217 | 20509 | 6394 |

| STATE | <u>1982/83</u> | | <u>1983/84</u> | | <u>1984/85</u> | |
|-----------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|---------------------|
| | MALE | FEMALE | MALE | FEMALE | MALE | FEMALE |
| ANAMBRA | 1193 | 503 | 1803 | 589 | 1572 | 801 |
| BAUCHI | 1160 | 206 | 1471 | 289 | 1183 | 346 |
| BENDEL | 2043 | 1264 | 2421 | 1077 | 2117 | 1128 |
| BENUE | 1115 | 229 | 1520 | 340 | 1150 | 424 |
| BORNO | 960 | 193 | 1429 | 242 | 1094 | 282 |
| CR. RIVER | 1052 | 254 | 1335 | 353 | 1163 | 406 |
| GONGOLA | 902 | 146 | 1170 | 151 | 875 | 254 |
| IMO | 1093 | 424 | 1555 | 585 | 1845 | 749 |
| KADUNA | 1071 | 595 | 2061 | 858 | 1842 | 870 |
| KANO | 1409 | 307 | 1781 | 457 | 1807 | 548 |
| KWARA | 1994 | 621 | 2108 | 645 | 1793 | 703 |
| LAGOS | 3197 | 1708 | 2944 | 1750 | 2663 | 2068 |
| NIGER | 746 | 184 | 1145 | 294 | 861 | 268 |
| OGUN | 1371 | 326 | 1680 | 532 | 1461 | 527 |
| ONDO | 1457 | 329 | 1881 | 529 | 1533 | 591 |
| OYO | 2346 | 1022 | 2549 | 1171 | 2402 | 1317 |
| PLATEAU | 1301 | 339 | 1644 | 520 | 1520 | 514 |
| RIVERS | 1331 | 348 | 1487 | 443 | 1465 | 477 |
| SOKOTO | 817 | 91 | 1276 | 251 | 1027 | 277 |
| ABUJA | | | 416 | 85 | 458 | 149 |
| TOTAL | 27206 | 9089 | 33676 | 11161 | 29831 | 12699 ²¹ |

The organizational structure of the NYSC reflects the federal system. The national directorate is in charge of formulating general policies, collecting data from universities and colleges on the number of prospective graduates, potential deferments and exemptions. The state directorates administer and supervise the corps members. The states are supposed to be assigned an approximate equal number of participants. However, as Table 2 shows this is not strictly followed.

The scheme lasts for 12 months. Students in Nigerian institutions sign up early in their last year of study. Overseas graduates sign up on their return to Nigeria. Participants can express a preference for posting by job or location but the policy is that they are not to be sent to their home States except in extremely unusual

²¹ Source: *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos, 1986, p. 108.

circumstances. Married women with children are posted near their families.

The programme starts with an orientation course of 5-6 weeks in the state of assignment. This course includes a schedule of early morning physical activities and military drills, followed by classes for about 3-4 hours. Later in the day, the participants attend seminars and other leisure activities. The orientation ends with a tour of the state during which they are shown local sights and hosted by local dignitaries and traditional rulers. After the tour they report for their primary duties. Usually about 70 percent are assigned to teach in schools. A month into primary assignment, work is started on various community development projects to which the youth corpsers have been assigned. These projects mainly involve manual labour, such as building bridges and culverts, abattoirs, hospitals, mosques and digging drainage ditches. They work side by side with members of the community who look upon them as a source of welcome free labour. This community work is done one day in the week until about two weeks to the end of their primary assignments. Until 1985, the community development work was not combined with the primary assignments. A period of about three weeks was devoted solely to community work in the spring. Each corper is expected to work on the NYSC commercial farms at least once. The idea of the commercial farm was introduced in 1986 by the Babangida administration 'to acquaint Corps members with the tools of agricultural management and entrepreneurship in order for them to be able to embark on viable self-employment projects at the end of their service'.²² They pass out of the scheme during a final 1-2 week period in camp in July/August when they are presented with certificates without which they cannot be

²² Bassey Ita (ed.), *Collected Speeches of the President, Major General Ibrahim B. Babangida*, Lagos, Ministry of Information and Culture, 1986, p. 266.

employed in Nigeria. Merit awards are given at both state and national levels as incentives to the corps members to work hard during the service period. Recipients of these awards are guaranteed employment with the federal government. In the present climate of high unemployment, this has no doubt helped the productivity level of the NYSC.

Impact on National Loyalty & Unity

Generally, assessments of the scheme have been positive about its contribution to national unity. According to the NYSC national directorate, its contribution to national unity is implicit in its principles and practice of deployment.²³ Between 75 and 83 percent of corps members are annually posted to states other than their home states to live and work for twelve months and thus they, and their friends and relatives who feel obliged to visit them during the service year, are given the opportunity to interact with Nigerians of other ethnic groups and learn about them at first hand. The scheme has therefore helped to reduce ethnic tensions and to eliminate stereotypical views about other peoples, regions and customs by enabling the participants to see parts of the country they might not otherwise have visited on their own and by giving them first hand knowledge about other groups as well as fostering inter-ethnic marriages among the youths.²⁴

Many commentators support the directorate's claims about the scheme's contribution to national unity. For example, Margaret Peil observed that it has helped

²³ NYSC, *A Compendium of the NYSC Scheme: Ten Years of Service to the Nation*, Lagos, Super Colour Productions for NYSC National Directorate, 1983?, p. 131.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 131-132.

to break down prejudice among the elites.²⁵ Amaechi Nweze described it as the greatest achievement of the military, observing that it has promoted inter-ethnic marriages, led to the formation of friendships across ethnic boundaries, and to the appreciation of the affinities in ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversities in the country. He, however, concluded that the scheme was most successful at its initial stages, especially for government post-civil-war reconciliation and rehabilitation programmes.²⁶ President Babangida described the scheme as the bedrock of Nigeria's nation-building efforts, pointing out that it has promoted cordial relationship amongst Nigerians and helped to minimize the negative stereotype conception by the various communities about each other by bringing youths from diverse ethnic backgrounds together in states other than their own.²⁷

These general assessments are further supported by the NYSC national directorate's own surveys and research. An evaluation of the scheme at the end of its first year, showed that 30 percent of the members were ready to stay and work in the state where they had done their service, while for almost two-thirds this was their first visit to that particular state.²⁸ According to the NYSC handbook for 1975/76, the orientation camps produced the following changes in attitudes: 83 percent of the participants appreciated more the culture and way of life of others, 68 percent understood better the problems of the state to which they were deployed, 58 percent

²⁵ Peil M., *Nigerian Politics: the People's View*, Cassells London, 1976, pp. 84-85.

²⁶ Amaechi Nweze, "Higher Education Manpower Resources and Citizenship", in M.O. Kayode and Y.B. Usman (eds.), *The Economic and Social Development of Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁷ Bassey Ita, *Collected Speeches of the President, Major General Ibrahim B. Babangida*, op. cit. p. 272.

²⁸ Anthony Kirk-Greene and Douglas Rimmer, *Nigeria since 1970: a Political and Economic Outline*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981, p. 53-54.

agreed that all Nigerians were basically similar in several respects, 62 percent had never been to their state deployment before and for the East Central State, the figure was as high as 91 percent.²⁹ An opinion survey conducted by the directorate in 1980 showed that 80 to 85 percent of participants felt that the scheme gave them the opportunity to know other regions and peoples of the country.³⁰ An average of 31 percent strongly agreed, and 52 percent fairly agreed that the scheme positively influenced national understanding and integration. Only about 9 percent disagreed. Another 9 percent were indifferent. The survey of 1982/83 corps members indicated that 70 percent of them had developed more positive attitudes towards their host communities, 16 percent more negative attitudes while 14 percent reported no change in attitude either way.³¹

These figures are doubtful. They are based on loose sampling methods with no account taken of other factors that influence attitude change.³² For example the figures for self reliance and patriotism were based on 100 questionnaires sent by the national headquarters to each state with an average return rate of 30.6 percent for the Western areas and zero percent for Lagos state.³³ Nor is it known who was sampled in each state, who answered the questionnaires and why the response rate differed so widely.

²⁹ NYSC, *National Youth Service Corps Handbook*, Lagos, National Directorate, 1975-6, pp. 24-25.

³⁰ Augustine Ikein, "Nigeria: Nation Building through the National Youth Service Corps", in Donald Eberly and Michael Sherraden (eds.), *The Moral Equivalent of War?, a study of Non-Military Service in Nine Nations*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1990, p. 107.

³¹ NYSC, *A Compendium of the NYSC Scheme*, op. cit., p. 131.

³² Marein, "National Service and National Consciousness in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 640.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 640.

An informal interview with eight graduates of the scheme in 1988 suggest that the expressed positive opinion by individuals, and the directorate's own evaluations on the scheme's effect on national loyalty and unity are too optimistic. Six of those interviewed thought that the NYSC was a waste of their time, a waste of government funds, and a means by which some Nigerians enrich themselves. According to them, corpsers are under-utilized. Local officials do not trust them with anything worthwhile or important to do. Formally, they are on secondment. Their salaries are paid by the NYSC Directorate. They are not as directly under the supervision and disciplinary powers of heads and superiors as are the regular employees. Regular employees resent them and this causes friction and disaffection. One of my informants, Miss Ukachi Ekeh, from Imo State, claimed that she was persecuted at her primary assignment in Ogun State. According to Miss Eke her troubles started when she was assigned teaching as her primary assignment. By training, she is a lawyer and had never had any teaching experience. Neither was she given any sort of training by the NYSC to prepare her for the classroom. She was not a good teacher and the pupils laughed at her. The school principal treated her complaints with contempt. She asked for transfer and eventually was transferred to Lagos State. Abuse of corpsers is as old as the scheme. In 1977, there was concern that corpsers 'who serve as tools in this medium of achieving national goal were ill treated and nicknamed horrible and unbearable appellations'.³⁴ During my service year in Bornu State, some of my colleagues complained of being badly treated at their place of primary assignment but these were in the minority.

³⁴ G. Omotola, "National Youth Slaves", in *Daily Times*, January 29, 1977, cited in Marenin, op. cit., p. 639.

Those interviewed wondered why the government spent so much money on them and the institution, if they were not to be utilized responsibly. Paradoxically, they all saw their under- utilization as advantageous because it allowed them time to 'do their own thing'. This perception of their under-utilization as both a waste of their time and a waste of government funds can be interpreted to mean a negative assessment of the contribution of the scheme to national unity. Yet, it also demonstrates the existence of some form of national loyalty. In one sense it suggests that they lack faith in their role as corpsers to effect a change in attitude towards unity and loyalty. Yet, the concern for their under utilization and for government funds suggests some sort of public-mindedness. This cognitive dissonance is further compounded by their general acceptance of the scheme as some sort of guaranteed holiday.

Complaints about under utilization are not general. It is common only amongst those youth corpsers assigned to ministries. This may be a reflection of the general level of efficiency at the civil service. Those deployed in health, legal aid and education (which has the largest number, about 70-80 percent), complain of being over worked. Their contributions to national development are the basis for the general positive evaluation of the scheme as an agency for manpower distribution since it supplies states with educated personnel they would not normally be able to attract.

My informants were split on the contact thesis of the scheme. Half of them thought that their knowledge of people from other ethnic groups had increased as a result of the scheme. The negative and indifferent attitudes of the other half is understandable. The group comprised those whose homes were in Lagos or who had gone to school in Lagos, which was their state of assignment. For this group there was no need to make new friends or contacts. This demonstrates that certain rules of the

scheme are being subverted.

All of them thought that it was absurd to suggest that the scheme had increased their sense of loyalty to Nigeria in any form. The reaction to the question is quite interesting. There was a general pause and exchanges of looks of bewilderment followed by Miss Eke's exclamation 'Odiegwu' meaning literally 'it is fearful' which made everyone laugh. Granted that this assessment is anecdotal, it is still indicative of the feelings of those whose attitudes are supposed to be changed. The interpretation of the scheme as a huge joke in so far as the attainment of national loyalty is concerned also presents an unresolved ambivalence towards the scheme. It may either suggest that the scheme is incapable of effecting a change of attitude towards national loyalty or that my informants are unaware of the need for a change in attitude or perhaps, the desirability of such a change. From their explanation the latter seemed to be the general opinion. They pointed out that they were not the ones who needed to be changed but the 'big men' who rule Nigeria. The story of Miss Marie-Therese Shotunde, a Yoruba, is both interesting and instructive on this issue. On her return to Nigeria from the United Kingdom where she was educated, she registered for the scheme and was deployed in Lagos State where she was born and bred. The person in charge of her posting was an old family friend who thought he was doing her a favour and posted her to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. There again, another family friend was in charge. The friend reasoned that what she needed was a 'holiday' and assigned her to read newspapers in the institute's library. She complained of boredom and was reassigned. At the new place, again, an old family friend was in charge. He 'ordered' her to go home and put her time to better use. She was not to bother to come to work but that her salary would be paid. After

a few weeks at home doing nothing, she applied to be re-posted and was assigned to teach economics at a school. She enjoyed the teaching experience immensely because she felt she was at least serving some purpose. Before her experience of the NYSC, she had a favourable image of the scheme based on the experience of an older cousin who was a member of the first group of youth corpsers enrolled in 1974/75. She concluded that the entire NYSC experience conspired 'to put me off Nigeria for it opened my eyes to all sorts of atrocities'.³⁵

The group observed that the only way in which it could have helped national unity is in the amelioration of unemployment among young graduates. They agreed that it assures new graduates of some form of employment. Since under-utilization was identified by them as a major obstacle in the achievement of the scheme's objectives, it will be wrong to assume that employment here means being of service to the nation. It seems more of an evaluation motivated by personal calculation of material gain rather than of national service. This conclusion seems reasonable as they seemed to be more concerned with their remunerations which are quite generous considering the general poor economic climate. The monthly housekeeping money paid out to the corpsers by the directorate has increased from 125 naira in 1974 through 180 naira by 1978 to 250 naira in 1990. The employers to whom they are assigned pay them an additional sum that ranges from 30 naira a month in the ministries to up to about 300 naira in the Customs and Excise Department. Employers in the oil business, for example, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and Shell, give them added perks such as free lunches while others may give them free accommodation.

³⁵ Interview with Miss M. F. Shotunde.

The cognitive dissonance between service to nation and service to self may be understood properly in the broader context of the group image of Nigerian students of higher learning. They believe that they are the most nationalistic and yet the most oppressed group of the elite groups in Nigeria. It is therefore not they who need a lesson in national loyalty but the leaders. Ironically, under-utilized as my informants claimed to have been, they did not consider that their salaries were too high for the little work they did.

The scheme has considerably shifted some of its emphasis from the objective of producing 'new Nigerians' to that of providing manpower. This manpower is increasingly allocated to match the skills of the participants and to meet the needs of the nation.³⁶ For instance, the expansion of the NYSC in 1976/77 to include holders of HND and NCE from the polytechnic and advanced teacher training college was to use the NYSC to operationalize the UPE.³⁷ Several health centres, clinics and hospitals, notably those in rural areas, and particularly in areas with difficult terrain, would have been left unmanned and unattended except for the presence of youth corps doctors and other health personnel.³⁸ In 1986 the NYSC community development scheme was overhauled in order to use the corpsers 'in the monitoring of Government projects at the local government level' and 'to generate more employment opportunities by creating jobs at the grassroots'.³⁹ Critics of the scheme argue that the conscription of graduates into the NYSC conceals much of graduate

³⁶ Marenin, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

³⁷ *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, August 14, 1976, p. 11.

³⁸ President Babangida, "NYSC and National Integration" in Bassey Ita (ed.), *Collected Speeches of the President*, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 266.

unemployment.⁴⁰ They regard the perception of the NYSC as a source of employment in an environment of high graduate unemployment as a mark of false consciousness.⁴¹ According to my informants, the scheme is not a mask for unemployment. Rather, it serves as an 'unofficial unemployment benefit scheme'. Owing to high levels of graduate unemployment, NYSC graduates who find themselves without work bribe officials at the national directorate to re-insert their names into the current service year. Thus, they are assured of some income while searching for a more permanent employment. In some cases, it is not for fear of unemployment but the fact that they feel that the NYSC offers better conditions than certain types of employment, for example teaching in remote areas. At the end of the orientation month youth corpsers can collect up to 600 naira. This includes the 250 naira monthly stipend, and the bicycle, housing and transport allowances. This is more than the 400 naira or so a month a first time graduate is likely to earn on level 08 step two, the salary grade at which he would start off in the civil service. After orientation, depending on where he is posted, he can earn more than this in a month. Besides, in full time employment, much will be expected of him by both family and society, whereas as a youth corper he is excused certain responsibilities. There are other perks that accompany being a corper not the least of which is the 'employment of someone to double for you while you put your time to better use'.⁴² Miss Ekeh told me that three of her friends had paid people to stand in for them at the orientation camp so that the four of them could holiday abroad together. Also, during community

⁴⁰ See for instance, Fide Osuntoku, "Expansion of University Education in Nigeria", in Kayode and Usman (eds.), *op. cit.* p 148.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 148.

⁴² Interview with Miss U. Ekeh.

project period, some corpsers use their daily allowance to employ outside labour to do their manual jobs for them. In its first year 1973/74 some corps members revealed that they spent part of their daily allowance on hiring labourers to carry out the community projects and just stood by while the labourers worked.⁴³ Four of my informants did not do the compulsory farm work. Miss Ekeh claimed that for five naira (about 20 pence), the farm inspector would let a corper register as having done his/her farm work.

There is need to treat with caution these anecdotal and impressionistic assessments from my discussion group. However, these views do not differ remarkably from those expressed in a survey of incoming and outgoing corpsers in Kaduna State in 1976 by students of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.⁴⁴ Marenin deduced three general observations from that survey. Firstly, the levels of national identification and public spiritedness were low, especially on questions of overcoming the elite-mass gap and of reducing cultural salience and stereotyping. Secondly, the NYSC seemed relatively ineffective as a vehicle for attitude change. Thirdly, the data showed considerable inconsistency in the attitudes of the respondents as regards their personal fates. Professed commitment to Nigeria, to serve the nation at the cost of personal gain, exists side by side with refusal of specific means such as slashing the incomes of the elite to which the participants belonged by virtue of their university education. He observed that the evaluation of specific aspects of the programme were negative, while evaluation of the effect of interaction was positive. The frequency of

⁴³ National Youth Service Corps, "Report on the Post-Orientation Course, Service Year, 1973-74., p. 22 quoted in Marenin, *op. cit.* p. 636.

⁴⁴ Marenin, *op. cit.*, pp. 649-651.

social contact showed a strong correlation with both general and specific evaluations of the programme. Orientation training was judged sufficient by three quarters of the respondents who experienced much contact and less than half who reported little interaction.

Another survey by Akinade Sanda of the University of Ibadan also supports the views expressed by my informants.⁴⁵ He concluded that the programme was effective in accomplishing its goals to a very limited extent and that the changes in attitudes envisaged in the scheme were contingent on factors outside the scheme. Most of the youths under survey indicated that the idea that they needed to be instilled with discipline was absurd. It was rather the leaders of the nation that needed to be disciplined. They advocated economic, political and socio-cultural independence but very few of them were prepared to make the necessary sacrifice to achieve such autonomy. Most of them appreciated the opportunity provided by the scheme for new experiences and enhanced awareness of other groups and the country's problems while at the same time condemning it for wasting their time by under-utilizing them. The greatest achievement of the scheme for national unity was in connection with increasing youth mobility, enhancing their national awareness and social interaction.

Theoretically, the scheme is based on the assumption that ethnicity is the result of cultural differences and historical animosities between the different ethnic groups. Implicit in this approach is the belief that ethnicity is the result of cultural isolation and distance of the groups and hence, conflict resolution is only possible if the groups can be brought into contact with other. It is much more the case that ethnicity is the result

⁴⁵ A.O. Sanda, *Problems and Prospects of the National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Academy Press for NISER, 1976, pp. 63-106.

of contact rather than cultural or geographical distance. It is in contact with other groups that groups find the need to define themselves. However, the temporary nature of the scheme mitigates this factor of situational ethnicity. Thus, the programme has the potential to facilitate increased national unity through increased interaction and redistribution of manpower. Increased interaction among peoples may reinforce ethnic distinctions, when it results in negative experiences. However, if interactions are perceived as friendly or cordial it goes without saying that the result will be positive and lead to the belief that cultural distinctions are not necessarily detrimental to national unity. Thus, it has the capacity to create favourable circumstances for mutual understanding and trust. However, the fact that only a limited number of Nigerian youths have the opportunity to experience the socialization afforded by the scheme limits the impact of the programme in promoting national unity. For the majority of other youths who are not polytechnic or university graduates and the masses of Nigerians, the functional consequences of NYSC do not apply.⁴⁶

The scheme's contributions to manpower redistribution is quite immense. This is especially so if considered within the context of the regional imbalances in educational and technological advancement which have tended to breed fear and insecurities of 'domination by skills' among northerners. The fact that both participants in the scheme and officials share positive, if divergent, perceptions of its manpower utility is auspicious for the programme's achievement of its national goals. While corps members see the scheme as a source of employment, the government sees it as a source of ready labour to be mobilized for the needs of the state. 'The scheme today remains an important institution for redirecting and utilizing our abundant material

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

resources towards better and positive nation-building'.⁴⁷ This functional perception of the NYSC by both participants and government makes it a useful tool for national unity, that is, if national unity is defined as government need. In other words, the scheme's potential for unity would be realized in so far as unity is systematically pursued as a 'need' by government.

However, the goal of national unity has been pushed to the background. The programme is now a ready, if temporary, source of educated manpower rather than a year of service and learning to be a Nigerian. The considerable resources which are being invested in the NYSC in salaries alone, about 50 million naira in 1977/78, seem to require that the government must point to specific concrete and more substantial achievements rather than claim a harder-to-prove national consciousness and loyalty spirit.⁴⁸ The general low commitment to service by participants and the corresponding poor organizational quality and supervision by NYSC officials suggest that national loyalty as an objective of the scheme is not considered a serious goal. Also, the enforced nature of the scheme renders it useless as a vehicle for inculcating national loyalty. It is perhaps not incorrect to draw the conclusion that the NYSC programme seems relatively ineffective as a vehicle for attitude change since attitudes remain governed by self interest rather than national interest, despite protestations to the contrary.

Despite its limitations, the scheme has come to stay. Many Nigerians regard it as a national edifice which can only be modified but not totally abrogated.⁴⁹ It is for

⁴⁷ Babangida, "NYSC and National Integration", *op. cit.* p. 265.

⁴⁸ Marein, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

⁴⁹ P.A.I. Obanya, "Growth and Development in Nigerian Education since Independence" in Kayode and Usman (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 195.

CHAPTER SIX

INDIGENIZATION AND MASS MOBILIZATION

Introduction

One aspect of socialization in Nigeria involves mass campaigns to erode ethnic loyalties and to generate a popular sense of a homogenous national identity and interest. These campaigns aim to change attitudes and also bring about socio-economic growth. Thus, nationalist ideology is conjured as the means through which attitudes are changed for the benefit of the society.

Until recently mass campaigns in Nigeria were optional. They were devised by individual regimes to legitimize their rule. However, they are now legally binding on both the government and the governed. Their nationalist aims have been incorporated into the revised 1989 Constitution in an entirely new civic section, which some members of the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) jokingly described as 'a new Ten Commandments'. That section (24, Chapter Two) requires Nigerians to obey the constitution, respect the national flag, national anthem, and national pledge, to defend the country and render national service, live in harmony and unity, respect the religion of other citizens, pay tax, maintain law and order and ensure the good upbringing of the Nigerian child. The CRC recommended that the subject of civics, where these obligations are taught, be reintroduced in schools. By these provisions loyalty to the state is no longer voluntary; it is obligatory. Just as Nigerians demand their rights under the constitution the state also demands obligations, especially loyalty and service, from its citizens under the same constitution. In this sense, Nigerian nationalism fulfils the classical nationalist principle which implies the duty of Ruritarians

to the state which encompasses and represents the Ruritarian nation.¹

In this chapter I shall, firstly, discuss the efforts to Nigerianize the economy with particular reference to the indigenization policy. I shall then examine mass campaigns to 'breed new Nigerians'. These include the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), and the Better Life Programme for women. Such campaigns are the most concrete manifestation of governmental desire to imbue the citizenry with a sense of common purpose and, thereby, to secure popular legitimacy for the Nigerian state and for their own rule.

INDIGENIZATION: NIGERIA FOR NIGERIANS CAMPAIGN

Nigeria in 1960 attained political independence but not economic independence. Most of the businesses and economic enterprises were controlled by foreigners. By 1970 the hold of multinational and foreign owned companies on the society was total.² Such a situation was not only damaging to Nigeria's political independence, it conflicted with, 'and indeed made a mockery of two dominant ideologies of the rulers - the ideology of nationalism and Nigerianization'.³ The 1970 National Development Plan decried the situation, observing that:

Political independence without economic independence is but an empty shell... the interest of foreign private investors cannot be expected to

¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, CUP, 1990, p. 9.

² Akinade O. Sanda, *The Challenge of Nigeria's Indigenization*, Ibadan, NISER, 1982, p. 16.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

and poultry farming. Control of capital intensive enterprises was to be shared between Nigerians and foreigners with a minimum of 40 percent control to Nigerians. The list of such enterprises included beer brewing, basic iron and steel manufacturing, internal air transport, insurance, paper conversion, construction and cement manufacturing. Because of fraudulent practices by multi-nationals and foreign owners of companies and their Nigerian collaborators, the decree was revised in 1977.

The new decree enlarged the list of enterprises reserved exclusively for Nigerians. Sixty percent equity control was granted to Nigerians in enterprises listed under a second category. The banking industry which was excluded in the old decree was included in this category. The government desired to have controlling interests in the three big banks - Barclays Bank, First Bank, and the United Bank for Africa. A third category, comprising thirty-nine enterprises, required a minimum of forty percent equity participation by Nigerians. These included distilleries, manufacturers of photographic and optical goods, electronics, rail equipment and clocks, and all other private sector enterprises not included in the first and second categories. A foreigner was to remain owner of an enterprise only if his company had an annual turn-over of not less than 25, 000,000 naira, branches in at least half of the states of the federation, and sixty percent equity participation by Nigerians. No Nigerian was to hold more than 5 percent of the shares of a business.

Nigerians did not readily take advantage of the business and investment opportunities opened up by the decree. Most of them were uninformed about the details of the policy, its implications and the requirements for participation. The federal and state governments, in an effort to redeem the situation, bought shares on behalf of the people. This has facilitated the development of a Nigerian style state capitalism

which serves as an effective instrument for privatizing public wealth.

Furthermore, very few Nigerians could afford to buy the shares. Credit and other financial facilities were not equally accessible to most of the interested applicants. The banks, including the Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industries which was established by government to provide loans to people to buy shares, would lend only to the already rich and top civil servants. This resulted in the concentration of wealth in a few individuals.⁶ Eight Nigerian families were reported to have bought 15 percent of the companies indigenized.⁷

Foreign investors were unwilling to relinquish their control of the companies. They therefore exploited loopholes in the decree to undermine the campaign. For instance, the 60 percent shares allocated to Nigerians were distributed among thousands of shareholders. The remaining 40 percent foreign equity was held by a single foreign partner who thus had more control and power than any Nigerian director. By sponsoring the acquisition of shares by Nigerians, multi-nationals fortified their alliance with Nigerian capitalism and consequently their hold on the economy. Most of the affected companies did not comply with the indigenization provisions. Of the over 45,000 foreign owned businesses in the country only 2,450 were registered by the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Board by 1985.⁸

Nigeria's underdevelopment status was a major handicap to the exercise. Business conditions in the country were not developed enough for the indigenization

⁶ O. Teriba et al., "Some Aspects of Ownership and Control Structure of Business Enterprise in a Developing Economy: the Nigerian Case", *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 14, March 1, 1974, pp. 3-26.

⁷ *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 5, 1987, p. 41.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

of the economy. Nigerians lacked both the technical and administrative expertise to sustain the operations of the indigenized enterprises. However, the transfer of administrative expertise has been less problematic than technology transfer which has proved a most intractable problem for less developed countries such as Nigeria.

The reversal of Nigeria's economic fortunes further undermined the campaign. The global fall in oil prices in the 1980s plunged Nigeria into a recession from which it is still battling to recover. Under such a condition, the decree became an added disadvantage to the economy. It stifled the flow of much needed foreign investment. As a result, its provisions were greatly modified. Today, virtually no key industry is reserved exclusively for Nigerians. Foreigners are now actively being wooed to come to Nigeria and invest.

The greatest damage to the exercise was by Nigerians. For money they were willing to function as fronts for foreign owners of companies or to support them in other forms of circumventing the provisions of the decree. Self interest rather than national interest was the primary motivation. They were more interested in dispossessing foreign capitalists on whom they were dependent than in the idea of Nigerianization.⁹ Rich Nigerians used multiple applications and other devices to ensure that the pattern of share acquisition was uneven and thus subverted the goal of achieving an egalitarian society.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the indigenization decree was beneficial to nation-building in certain respects. It gave Nigerians the opportunity to take charge of their affairs. It

⁹ Gavin Williams, "Nigeria: the Neo-Colonial Political Economy", in Dennis L. Cohen and John Daniel (eds.), *Political Economy of Africa*, Essex, Longman, 1982, p. 49.

¹⁰ Sanda, op. cit., p. 68.

sharpened the desire of many people to participate in the economic life of the nation as it made them aware of new economic opportunities, especially in the manufacturing sector.¹¹ Because of the exercise, enterprises like road haulage, transportation and distribution are firmly in the hands of Nigerians. This is a radical departure from the period before indigenization when there were hardly any Nigerian controlled enterprises. However, the exercise did not emancipate the economy from foreign control, underscoring the fact that the success or failure of nationalism and nation-building is often determined by international relations and the structure of the international society.

The Nigerian experience provides evidence that economic opportunities matter more than attitudes. In other words, nationalism aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour in ways which will assist socio-economic development has only limited effects. The oil boom in the 1970s generated a popular awareness of being part of development and therefore, of being Nigerian. At the same time, it exacerbated Nigeria's economic dependency, encouraging profligacy and frivolous spending. The government and people went on a spending spree abroad, confident that money was no problem. The Head of State, General Gowon, told reporters in 1974 that Nigeria's problem was not money but how to spend it. Nigeria became a dumping ground for imported goods which were sold at exorbitant prices. It was more prestigious to buy foreign-made goods than to buy made-in-Nigeria goods. Locally manufactured goods were referred to in derogatory terms such as 'Igbo-made', 'Aba-made', 'Ijebu-made',

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

and 'Ochanja' or 'Ochanja-market-made'.¹² Items that were so labelled were bought only as a last resort. Some Nigerian manufacturers employed desperate tactics, such as sticking bogus made-in-England labels on their goods, in order to attract patronage. However, economic recession is changing the situation and promoting some sort of economic nationalism. Nigerians are being forced by poverty to patronize made-in-Nigeria goods where before such goods would have been derided as inferior. An opinion poll by a national daily showed that most Nigerians now buy Nigerian products.¹³ Majority of the respondents agreed that it was necessary to encourage local manufacturers and conserve foreign exchange. One respondent argued that the fact that people from other West African countries bought Nigerian goods 'goes to show that we produce the best products in West Africa.'¹⁴ Another was incredulous about the rate of appreciation of Nigerian goods. 'If I was told ten years ago that made in Nigeria goods would be competing favourably with foreign ones I would have doubted it'.¹⁵ There is now a new attitude of pride towards Nigerian food which is reflected in the inclusion of Nigerian food and cuisine in the art festivals and the trade fairs which were formerly dominated by western cuisine.

The greatest achievement in economic self-sufficiency has been made in textiles and dress making. The Nigerian *adire* (tie-and-dye) cloth has broken new grounds in the Nigerian fashion scene previously dominated by foreign materials and

¹² A.F. Uduigwomen, "Philosophy, Ethics and National Development", in J.U. Obot, (ed.), *Nigeria: the People and their Heritage*, Calabar, Wusen Press, 1987, p. 165.

¹³ "People Talk: What do you Think about Made-in-Nigeria Goods?", in *Vanguard*, Lagos, Thursday, August 13, 1987, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 5

fashions. Today there is a booming market in *adire* and other native cloths. This has been particularly beneficial for women because of the access to cottage industries which it has given them.

MASS MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGNS

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

The oil boom greatly undermined agricultural production. It made food production a wasted effort. Oil money brought in exotic foods - frozen food and meat, baked beans, canned salads, champagne etc.. These food items were cheaper and more prestigious than home-produced ones. Rice and bread, formerly secondary food items, became staples. Increased rural-urban migration worsened the food situation as those left behind in the rural areas could not meet the growing needs of the country for food. The government relied heavily on food imports to meet the food requirements of the country. It imported increasing quantities of a variety of food items, in particular rice and wheat flour for bread. Food importation reached an all time high in 1981. The stark reality in terms of food availability was that one out of every six Nigerian was 'fed wholly year-in-year out on imported food'.¹⁶

The Obasanjo regime decided to reverse the trend and launched the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) campaign.¹⁷ OFN was designed to bring home to Nigerians the dignity of labour through mass participation. In particular, it was to revive people's interest in farming. Every Nigerian was urged to cultivate any available land and make

¹⁶ P.N.C. Okigbo, *Essays in the Public Philosophy of Development*, Vol. 1, Enugu, Fourth Dimension, 1987, pp. 162-163.

¹⁷ Speech by the Head of State at the formal launching of the OFN, in Federal Government of Nigeria, *A March of Progress, Collected Speeches of His Excellency, General Olusegun Obasanjo*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, no date, p. 41.

farming a vocation. Schools, colleges, universities and the armed forces were all urged to grow part, if not all, of their own food. Perhaps its more revolutionary objective was to encourage public officers, who had either been dismissed or retired in the great purge under Mohammed, to engage in agriculture. Apologists for the programme claimed that it achieved some increase in food production. However, it did not bring about self sufficiency in food or a change in attitudes as foreign goods continued to be preferred.

In 1980 the programme was re-named Green Revolution by the Shagari administration. Its aims were essentially the same as those of OFN. The two campaigns differed only in implementation. While the OFN discouraged massive importation of food (through prohibition of luxury consumer items like water, beer and champagne), the Green Revolution tended to encourage it. In 1978, for instance, Nigeria spent 1,0004.2 million naira to import food whereas in 1981, two years after OFN became Green Revolution, the import bill was in excess of two billion naira.¹⁸ Such an increase in food importation contradicted the short term objective of the programme to turn the country side green with cash and food crops by 1985.¹⁹ The revolution failed with more than one billion naira in wasted funds. It succeeded only in enriching members of Shagari's party.

The Babangida administration also launched its own campaign to grow more food. The catch phrase of the campaign was 'Grow what you eat and eat what you grow'. A major weapon used by the administration to achieve self-reliance in food production is prohibition. To compel local industries to use local substitutes for

¹⁸ *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 5, 1987, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

imported raw materials, the President prohibited the importation of items such as rice, corn and maize, wheat, flour and barley.

The affected enterprises did not like the ban on imports because it was detrimental to their interests. They therefore initiated campaigns to undermine local production of the items. 'Instead of growing and using our corn, poultry farmers launched a campaign saying that corn grown in Nigeria would poison our chicken!'²⁰ A similar campaign was launched against locally produced wheat and rice which were alleged to be detrimental to health. Uncle Ben's rice from America was said to be preferable.²¹ These campaigns against locally produced foods were spearheaded by foreign interest groups, especially US citizens who owned large shares in Nigerian flour mills. The ban on wheat importation was most detrimental to US wheat farmers who in 1986 supplied over 90 percent of the wheat requirement of Nigeria. Aided by their government, they spared no expense to regain their coveted position. For instance, the Agricultural Attache at the American Embassy in Nigeria, Thomas Pomeroy, in March 1988 circulated information deriding Nigerian produced wheat. He claimed that 'Nigeria, would be better off with the American hard wheat variety' even though Nigerian millers complained that hard wheat was too hard on their machinery.²² This foreign opposition to programmes for national self-reliance in food production further underlines the impact of the international society on nationalism and nation-building.

²⁰ A letter to Nigerians by the Information Minister, Tony Momoh, entitled "Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in *The African Guardian*, Lagos, May 9, 1988, p. 13.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²² *The African Guardian*, May 9, 1988, p. 20.

War Against Indiscipline (WAI)

WAI was instituted under the military regime of Muhammadu Buhari. The aim of WAI was to bring back sanity to the Nigerian society. The crusade was against all forms of social malady - corruption, ethnicity, degeneracy. It extolled the virtues of honesty, patriotism, nationalism, hard work, sanitation, queuing, family life and the good society. The campaign was planned in 35 phases. An average of three phases was to be launched each year. Its objectives were therefore conceived to be accomplished in 12 years. By August 27 1985 when the regime was toppled it had launched only five phases.

The first phase launched was aimed at instilling in Nigerians the queuing culture. People were exhorted to wait patiently for their turn whether at bus stops, post offices, football stadia, banks, airports etc.. The second phase launched in May 1984 dealt with work ethics. The aim was to inculcate the conventions of hard work, punctuality and accountability. Any employee found not at work by 7:30 a.m. was summarily dismissed. Absenteeism and truancy were denounced. Many workers complied for fear of losing their jobs.

The third phase launched in August 1984 was to inculcate in Nigerians a spirit of nationalism and patriotism. Jingles were used to urge people to be patriotic and nationalistic. One of them was as follows:

Me, I like my country,
I like the land and people,
Everything dey for Nigeria,
Make you join hands to make Nigeria better,

I like am, I like am

Yes, who no like better thing?

Adverts on television and posters extolled the qualities of a good Nigerian. One television advert about Andrew, who decided to quit Nigeria for the United States, has promoted the popular use of the term Andrew to refer to an unpatriotic person. Another television advert featured a map of Nigeria full of cracks and falling apart on all sides with Nigerians of all ages and creeds hard at work to hold the pieces together. The caption underneath was, 'We all have to strive to keep this country together again'.

Big and small enterprises were made to hoist the Nigerian flag outside their places of business. Job seekers were required to recite the national anthem and the national pledge as part of their interview. Those in employment were required to know and recite them when asked or they lost their jobs. Legal sanction for the campaign was provided by Decree No. 2 which conferred special powers on the Chief of Staff Supreme Military Headquarters to detain persons for acts prejudicial to state security.

The fourth phase was the anti-corruption and economic sabotage campaign launched in May 1985. Death penalties were imposed on a range of economic, violent and anti-social crimes which gave Nigeria a bad image both at home and abroad. Smuggling of Nigerian currency for sale abroad was regarded as sabotage. The Recovery of Public Property Decree No. 3 was promulgated to give the campaign legal sanction. The decree gave the Assets Investigation Panel the authority to probe into the assets of public officers. In the first few months of sitting more than 40 public executives in the Shagari regime were jailed for various charges of official corruption.

Among them were ex-governors of Oyo, Ogun, Kano, Plateau, Imo, Anambra, Rivers, Bendel, Benue and Kwara States.

The fifth phase launched in July 1985 was the environmental sanitation phase. This campaign was aimed at stopping insanitary habits like spitting and urinating in public places, noise making, street trading, food hawking, random refuse disposal etc.. The cleanest state in the federation was awarded 1 million naira, the runner-up 600,000, while the third got 400,000.

Many Nigerians liked the idea behind WAI. They expected that it would lead to the new Nigeria which the new regime had promised them after ousting the corrupt civilian regime of Shagari. However, it failed to live up to the hope which General Buhari had held out to the people in his maiden speech when, with patriotic zeal, he observed that 'this generation of Nigerians, and indeed, future generations have no other country than Nigeria' and pledged to work with the people to salvage the country.²³

The campaign was very wasteful. The environmental sanitation programme was particularly extravagant. Most state governments closed offices at noon to enable civil servants to clear refuse dumps and clean roads and drains. Millions of petty businesses were ruined as market stalls and homes were destroyed. The government acknowledged afterwards that many of the demolished houses, particularly in Lagos, were demolished in error.²⁴

The greatest indictment against WAI was that its manner of implementation was too authoritarian. It created public hostility and popular disquiet. People complied

²³ *Newswatch*, September 9, 1985, p. 26.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

out of fear rather than conviction. It gave the impression that one needed to police Nigerians crudely in order to mobilize them.²⁵ The various decrees were seen as too coercive. Decree No. 4 which protected public officers against false accusation was seen as a denial of the fundamental right of individuals to freedom of expression. According to the decree, lectures, symposia, student rallies and meetings were subversive activities. Many journalists were imprisoned under the decree.²⁶

The campaign for nationalism and patriotism was regarded by many Nigerians as a disguise for tyranny. The Nigerian Security Organization (NSO) which was the enforcing arm of the campaign was alleged to have been used by the head of the organization, Lawal Rafindadi, to deal with his perceived enemies.²⁷

The programme was further criticized for discriminating in favour of some ethnic groups. One often cited example of discrimination is the decision to keep ex-President Shehu Shagari, a Fulani like Buhari, under house arrest while his deputy, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo, was held in prison. Another popular example concerns the permanent secretary in the Federal Ministry of Finance, Alhaji Abubakar Alhaji. He lost several thousands of pounds of his personal money to thieves in Austria while on official trip in 1984. He could not explain how he came by the money. By law civil servants are not allowed to keep foreign accounts. Both Melford Okilo and Sam Mbakwe, ex-governors of Rivers and Imo States respectively, were jailed for a similar offence. The punitive measure against Abubakar Alhaji was a change of post from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of National Planning with a Nigerian National

²⁵ Bassey Ita, *Collected Speeches of the President, Major General Ibrahim B. Babangida*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, p. 53.

²⁶ *Newswatch*, September 9, 1985, p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) board membership to the bargain.²⁸

Another example is the case of the 53 suitcases. During the currency exchange programme in 1984 tight security was mounted at all ports of entry into Nigeria. Any body found carrying the old currencies was arrested and detained under Decree no 2. However, a retired ambassador, D.A. Waziri, and the Emir of Gwandu, both Fulani, brought in 53 suitcases popularly suspected of containing the illegal currencies. The 53 suitcases were forcibly cleared without being checked. This was done in full view of everyone at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos. The soldier who organized the clearance was Major Jokolo, Buhari's aide-de-camp.²⁹ Such discriminatory practices 'drove wedges between the different sections of the community and led to impassioned calls for confederation, occasioned by a sense of alienation felt by certain sections of the country'.³⁰

In a sense, WAI suggests that the masses are to blame for the indiscipline in the society. In other words, indiscipline is a problem only at the mass level; all is well at the top. What remains therefore to be achieved is mass nationalism since elite nationalism has already been achieved. Viewed like this, WAI was needless. Example rather than crude policing would have been the best teacher of discipline. However, indiscipline among the Nigerian leaders is more the problem rather than indiscipline among the masses.³¹ Mr. X's testimony at the sitting of the Miscellaneous Offenses

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

³¹ See for instance, Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, London, Heinemann, 1983, *passim*.

Tribunal in Lagos in 1988 underscores this point.³² In his defence, Mr. X stated that he saw no reason for being brought before the tribunal for vandalizing and appropriating the property of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), viz. electrical cables and wires. As a former employee of NEPA, he was bitter that the unlawful activities of those in senior positions within the company had gone unpunished. In particular, he was very aware of the fact that senior managers had over the years accepted bribes from contractors seeking mandates from NEPA by approving only those tender bids which had built into them a 'mobilization fee' representing a sum which ended up in the pockets of these senior officials. It was this type of activity which he felt had led to the deficit in NEPA's accounts and to the redundancy policy that caused his unemployed status.

I found out in an interview with ten residents of a Lagos suburb, Isolo, that only one of them had actually paid an electricity bill within eight months in 1988. The general feeling was that since those in power were able to benefit from the national wealth by virtue of their indiscriminate theft from the treasury, the masses should also be able to share in the national wealth. They can only do this by enjoying basic amenities free of charge since not everyone is lucky enough to have a key to the treasury.

Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER)

MAMSER was launched by the Babangida administration in 1986. Its main objective is to develop a politically conscious and disciplined citizenry that would be

³² Proceedings of the Miscellaneous Offenses Tribunal, Lagos, 1988.

proud to be Nigerian. Its ultimate aim is to inculcate in Nigerians a new set of attitudes, ideas and principles. MAMSER is therefore not different from WAI. The major difference has been in the manner of implementation. MAMSER's major strategy has been awareness rallies. To attract crowds the directorate employs the services of musicians.

The organizational structure of MAMSER reflects the federal structure. Its programmes and strategies are devised by the federal directorate which is divided into specialist units. These are publicity, mass mobilization, mass education, mobilization of special groups (such as the elite, rural people, aged, youth, women and handicapped), engineering and technology, food and agriculture, and monitoring and evaluation. This means that some, if not all, its activities inevitably encroach upon policy areas controlled by conventional government departments. To underscore the importance of MAMSER and avoid resistance from conventional departments, MAMSER directorate was made a part of President Babangida's office.

The programme's first test was mobilizing people for the local government elections in December 1987. Mobile film units went from village to village preaching 'the gospel of awareness'. Community leaders were made to address their peoples in local languages about their obligations and responsibilities. The chairman of the directorate, Jerry Gana, claims that the huge turn-out of voters for the local government elections was largely due to the programme's awareness initiative.³³

MAMSER, like WAI, has been criticized for being wasteful. Barely six months after its inception 20.5 million naira was spent on it. This is more than the 7.5 million naira spent by the Buhari regime on WAI in twice as much time. MAMSER is

³³ *Newswatch*, February 15, 1988, p. 26.

estimated to have spent one billion naira in two years and is projected to spend another 1.5 billion by 1992.³⁴ Yet Buhari's WAI was considered wasteful by President Babangida.³⁵ Critics of MAMSER argue that since economic recession has made most Nigerians 'hungry', money should be used, not to mobilize but, to feed them.³⁶

MAMSER has also been criticised for being at variance with Nigeria's capitalist ideology.³⁷ The political Bureau, which recommended the setting up of MAMSER, conceived it as the political arm of a socialist state structure but the government rejected the idea of a socialist state and accepted the idea of mass mobilization. The fact that a majority of the people appointed to MAMSER's National Directorate are self-professed socialists has encouraged the view that these appointments are a ploy by the president to pacify Nigerian socialists.³⁸ A socialist member of the directorate, Dr. X, informed me that he and the other socialist members of the directorate saw their appointment as a step towards the formation of a national socialist organization to contest elections for the Third Republic scheduled for 1992/93.³⁹

MAMSER, like its predecessors WAI and Shagari's paper Ethical Revolution, has laudable objectives.⁴⁰ However, its ability to deliver what it promises is in doubt. It is overloaded with diverse responsibilities. From its inception it has been charged

³⁴ *Newswatch*, May 28, 1990, p. 12.

³⁵ Babangida's Maiden Address, August 27, 1985, in Bassey Ita (ed.), *Collected Speeches of the President*, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁶ *Newswatch*, February 15, 1988, p. 26.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

³⁸ Opinion expressed by a participant at the seminar on MAMSER held at the Anthropology Department, University College, London, Friday, January 27, 1989.

³⁹ Conversation with Dr. X, member of the National Directorate of MAMSER.

⁴⁰ The Ethical Revolution under Shagari was only a revolution in intent. It was not operationalised.

with pursuing no less than 16 different objectives. Decisions as to what objectives are to be pursued at a local level are quite arbitrary. Many Nigerians believe that it is one of those programmes invented by government functionaries to enrich themselves. Given the bad record of all similar programmes in the past - Obasanjo's OFN, Shagari's Green and Ethical Revolutions, Buhari's WAI and the National Orientation Movement (NOM) of the incumbent administration - public cynicism and misgivings about it can hardly be regarded as misplaced.⁴¹ The objectives of government can best be served by spending the money wasted on these campaigns on the provision of social welfare programmes such as free education and health care. Such welfare programmes are more effective in instilling nationalism and patriotism because they help to redistribute wealth and thereby enable the majority of the people to enjoy the benefits of modernity. Nationalism and patriotism will not be inculcated simply by making people sing the national anthem or recite the national pledge. Neither can it be instilled by jingles on radio and television. True patriotism means a genuine commitment to the state. No one is going to be committed to a state that does not promote his interest and over-all well being.⁴² A state can best do this by providing social welfare services such as free education, free health care delivery, adequate housing and alleviating poverty.

Women And Better Life

The Better Life programme was initiated in 1987 by Maryam Babangida, the

⁴¹ *Newswatch*, September 21, 1987, p. 20.

⁴² Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation State*, Ibadan, Impact Publishers for the Historical Society of Nigeria, 1985, p. 32.

wife of the incumbent president. Its major objective is to emancipate rural women and incorporate them into national life. The initiative was planned to complement her husband's national mobilization campaign. To achieve her objectives, she co-opted the wives of the state governors to preside over the programme at the state level. The programme was accorded official status by decree in 1989. The decree established the National Commission for Women as a corporate body with perpetual succession and enlarged the scope of Better Life to include both rural and urban women. Mrs Babangida was duly appointed chairperson of the commission with all the rights and privileges attached to that office.

The most important activity of Better Life is the formation of cooperative societies. Given the marginal position of Nigerian women in general, and rural women in particular, it is reasoned that women stand a better chance of enhancing their position and influencing policies if they were united in cooperatives rather than if they worked individually. Other Better Life activities include stimulating creative entrepreneurship in the field of home and cottage industries, formulating policies and programmes aimed at enhancing the socio-economic and political position of women, helping women to enhance their earning power through loan schemes and improved vocational training, particularly in arts and crafts, food processing and related trades.

The highlight of the programme is its annual fair in Lagos. It brings together representatives of women cooperatives from all over the country in order for them to get to know each other and share and exchange ideas on socio-economic development. It is mainly designed to act as a bridge for ethnic, religious cultural and class differences among Nigerian women. The fair also provides a forum for the display of the products and potentials of rural Nigeria. It lasts for one week. Each day

of the week is marked by a group of States with displays of their culture, local products and food items. At the 1990 annual fair almost all the state governors were in Lagos to identify with the programme and participate in the celebration of their states' days.

Many Nigerians regard the fair as a great boost for nation-building because of the opportunity it gives to people from different sectors of the society to interact. One report praised its non-discriminatory nature, pointing out that:

'Even Mama Ngozi from Mbaise in Imo State had a face to face contact with Mama Rasaki of Lagos State. The opportunity given to both rural and urban women to interact forgetting whatever differences that may exist between them is one of the finest aspect of the programme.'⁴³

In general, the programme has contributed to consciousness raising among women and improved their earning capacity. In particular, it has improved the living standards of rural dwellers. Women whose products were hitherto limited to their local communities have been given opportunities to have their products exhibited and sold to the different peoples of Nigeria. Through its adult literacy programmes, it has enabled many rural Hausa women to read and write, at least in Hausa.⁴⁴ The programme is now considered a major instrument of government rural development project.

The programme was not always perceived favourably. When it first started, it

⁴³ *Daily Times*, Friday, March 23, 1990, p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Newswatch*, March 26, 1990, p. 10.

was derided as a publicity exploit and a waste of public funds. Its critics argued that in initiating the programme Maryam was acting unconstitutionally. They claimed that her relationship with the president did not confer on her the right to operate such a programme. Some saw the programme as another avenue for officials to enrich themselves and as a confidence trick on rural people.⁴⁵ Although many people now appreciate the programme, it still continues to attract criticisms, the major ones being that it is dominated by urban elites and that it is wasteful.

Despite these criticisms, most Nigerian women, especially rural women, value the programme. These women look up to Maryam Babangida as their messiah. Like Eva Peron of Argentina, she has maximized the opportunities offered by her position to simultaneously draw attention to herself and to the condition of Nigerian women by successfully selling the programme to the government. It is the first programme ever initiated on behalf of Nigerian women. In appreciation of her contribution to their welfare, some women wore outfits with her portrait printed on them at the 1990 Better Life Annual Fair and turned the popular gospel chorus, 'I have decided to follow Jesus' into 'I have decided to follow Maryam'.⁴⁶

The programme's major achievement has been to call attention to the key role of women in nation-building. Nigeria is a patriarchal society where women are seen more as objects of pleasure rather than as co-equals in national development. By underwriting it, the government acknowledges that women have a key role to play in nation-building. This is a radical departure from the previous practice which sought to undermine their role and contribution to national development.

⁴⁵ *Times International*, Lagos, Monday, March 26, 1990, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶ *Newswatch*, March 26, 1990, p. 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Introduction

Nigerian nation-builders recognize that if the national project is to survive it needs a cultural foundation. Nation-building in Nigeria has therefore involved cultural engineering. This is the deliberate creation of a national culture and heritage to underscore the new all-embracing Nigerian identity sought by the state. This project is a very ambitious one as Nigeria has a great diversity of cultures in terms of history, language, religion and folk art. The major concern of cultural nationalism has thus been how to synthesize the various cultures within Nigeria. The classical European nation-states were lucky. They had a core ethnic group culture to build upon.

Academics have been the most prominent contributors to the cultural project in Nigeria. They designed Nigeria's cultural contribution to the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC). They have been in the forefront of the development of a large body of Nigerian literature some of which have been acclaimed internationally. Historians, archaeologists and anthropologists from the country's universities have been working together on a state-sponsored project at Zaria to reconstruct the history of Nigeria. The Universities of Ibadan, Nsukka and Ife have established centres of African studies and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Lagos University have established centres to promote Nigerian art forms.

Three major approaches have been utilized to promote cultural nationalism in Nigeria. These are the indigenization of imported western and Islamic cultures, idealization of African culture, and nationalization of the various ethnic cultures. Thus

nationalism in Nigeria has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies but with the large cultural systems that both preceded and gave rise to it.¹ The Nigerian experience is an eminent example of how the myths, values, symbols and memories of distinctive ethnic cultures are appropriated to serve the purpose of nationalism.

The project of cultural engineering is generally problematic for multi-ethnic states. It exposes the fragility of such states by stressing the sacrifices and adjustments that the population at large has to make in order to produce the required changes. This is particularly true of language usage and religion. In Nigeria government policies in these two areas have upset some groups and created political tensions.

In this chapter, I shall examine cultural engineering in relation to language, history, literature, mass media and art festivals before conducting a more detailed examination of the federal state's religious policy in Chapter Eight.

LANGUAGE

Statistical information on the use and spread of languages in Nigeria is scarce. David Dalby estimated that one fifth of Africa's 2000 odd languages are spoken in the country.² Kier Hansford et al. listed about 400 languages spoken in Nigeria.³ Apart

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983, p. 19.

² David Dalby, "National Language Policy in the Context of Africa", in Ayo Bamgbose (ed.), *Language in Education in Nigeria*, (Vol. 2), Proceedings of the Kaduna Language Symposium, November, 1977, organised by The National Language Centre, published by Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos, 1980, p. 100.

from the three major *linguae francae* (four if Pidgin is included) and English, it is estimated that ten other Nigerian languages have over a million speakers, while a further twenty four languages have more than a hundred thousand speakers.⁴ This leaves about three hundred and sixty languages with fewer than a hundred thousand speakers.

The country's official language is English. This is a problem for nationalists. It is seen as shameful that the largest country in black Africa has adopted a western language rather than an indigenous African language as its official language. Nationalists argue that the spectre of imperialism will continue to haunt Nigeria unless the state discards English as its official language.⁵ But the choice of an indigenous language as a national language and *lingua franca* is a difficult one.

There is bitter disagreement over which Nigerian language should be adopted as the national tongue. Each time there has been a debate on which one should be chosen, those whose languages are not considered have reacted intensely. In 1961 a motion was passed in Parliament to introduce the teaching of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo with a view to adopting one of them by 1981. But it was not implemented because of the tension it generated. Many Nigerians feared that the hidden agenda was to elevate Hausa as the national language. An editorial opinion condemned the motion and warned that the parliament 'was asking more than the greatest nationalist

³ K. Hansford et al. (eds.) 1976, cited in Ben Elugbe, "Language Policy and National Development in Nigeria", (unpublished) paper presented at the Conference on African Languages, Development and the State, Centre of African Studies, University of London, SOAS, 25-26 April 1991, p. 1.

⁴ Jibril Munzali, "Minority Languages and *Linguae Francas* in Nigerian Education", in E.N. Emenanjo (ed.), *Multilingualism, Minority Languages and Language Policy in Nigeria*, Agbor, Central Books Ltd., 1990, pp. 114-115.

⁵ Abiodun Raufu, "Burying the Language Issue", *Daily Times*, Lagos, August 20, 1987, p. 11.

of them all can handle'.⁶

The issue was again raised at the Constituent Assembly in 1979. It was rejected in favour of the use of English as the only official language. Members of the assembly felt that a national language should first be introduced at school and not at the national assembly and that the provision for Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo discriminated against non-speakers of the three languages. The military government overruled the assembly's decision, observing that the continued use of English alone was embarrassing for Nigeria.⁷ Consequently, it inserted into the constitution the provision that the three major languages and English be adopted as national languages. The four languages were to be used in the two national assemblies. In the state assemblies, English and any indigenous languages decided upon by the state assembly were to be used. Although, the constitution does not specify, it presumes that Nigerians should learn one or the other of the three major languages. One would have thought that the place to start encouraging the use of local languages (if that was the aim) would not be the national assembly but those institutions that the people use in the pursuit of their daily needs such as schools, offices and banks.⁸

Members of minority groups were angered by the constitutional provision. Professor Obaro Ikime from one of the minority groups argued that it implied that the

⁶ *Daily Express*, November 23, 1961, cited in Arien Amayo, "The Search for National Integration and National Identity in Nigeria since Independence: the Linguistic Aspect", in M.O. Kayode and Y.B. Usman (eds.), *The Economic and Social Development of Nigeria: Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence, Zaria, March 1983, Volume II, Zaria, Panel on Nigeria since Independence Project, 1985*, p. 311.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 314.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 315.

minorities did not count in national politics?⁹ Another university lecturer, Eskor Toyo also from a minority group, condemned it as a 'product of big-nationality arrogance and hegemonic rivalry'.¹⁰ The plan, however, never got beyond the *WAZOBIA* concept fabricated from the three major languages.¹¹ *Wazobia* involves translating the national news on radio and television into Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. National Television newscasters greet the viewers in the three major languages at the end of the news. This concept is still resented by minorities. Ken Saro-Wiwa, a writer from the minority Rivers State, observes:

Wazobianism sees Nigeria as a melting-pot which stands on three legs, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, with all minorities cooking and boiling away in it for the pleasures of the majority groups - the Wazobians. To the Wazobian, all is well with Nigeria when this pot sits pretty on its three legs. Should any of the three legs suffer some inconvenience, we have loud grumblings, metaphysical theories, dissonance in the spheres, even civil war.¹²

The real issue in the bitter disagreement over which language should enjoy the supreme status of being the national language is the fear of political and cultural

⁹ Obaro Ikime, "Towards Understanding the National Question", in *Africa Events*, April, 1987, p. 43.

¹⁰ Eskor Toyo, "National Language and Development", *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, Thursday, September 18, 1986. p. 7.

¹¹ See glossary of terms.

¹² Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: the Brink of Disaster*, Lagos, Saros International Publishers, 1991, p. 35.

domination that is involved.¹³ The choice of a language other than one's group language lowers the esteem of the group. The military government rejected the continued use of English as an official language for precisely the same reason - it lowers the esteem of the state. The link between the choice of an official national language and fear of political and cultural domination conveys a lot about ethnicity in Nigeria. In particular, it demonstrates that more is involved in Nigerian ethnicity than mere material considerations. It is group worth that is at stake and such stakes are viewed with seriousness.

In view of the political costs of adopting an indigenous language as a national language (at this stage of Nigeria's development) one wonders if existing practices are indeed a problem for national integration. In other words, does linguistic division or the present pattern of multilingualism account for ethnicity? Which is better for nation-building, national embarrassment or peace?

In a multi-lingual country like Nigeria, English, particularly the widely spoken Pidgin, gives people the chance to communicate meaningfully across ethnic barriers without having to go through the cumbersome process of learning at school the multitude of languages that abound in the country.¹⁴ English may be embarrassing for the state but it nevertheless keeps the peace. Besides, it is less expensive to continue using English. The language issue in Nigeria involves not merely determining the role of local vernaculars and the selection of a national language, but also the selection of languages to be used at the State and local government levels. This means a three tier or even a four tier language policy. For a poor country such as

¹³ Raufu, "Burying the Language Issue", *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

Nigeria this is too expensive to administer. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the imposition of the three major languages on the citizens would provide Nigeria with a lingua franca. Such a policy is arbitrary and dangerous for Nigerian nationhood.¹⁵ It perpetuates the notion of Nigeria as a mere marriage of convenience of three warring ethnic groups¹⁶ and reinforces the authority of the three large groups.

The objectives of the government can best be served by leaving the language issue alone. Language usage is a dynamic process. Nigerians will continue to acquire their own repertoire of languages, regardless of government sanction, for personal communication, acquisition of knowledge and for career opportunities at local, national, regional or international levels. It is instructive on this issue that 118 languages have developed their own orthographies, with varying degrees of accuracy, without official sanction. Only twenty languages have official orthographies developed for them.¹⁷ Furthermore, most Nigerians already speak one or two of the major languages. The rudimentary language policy of colonial administration created a situation whereby the great majority of Nigerians speak Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, or Efik (Ibibio included) either as a first or a second language. Many Yoruba and Igbo people now speak Hausa and most Igbo people living in Lagos, particularly the younger ones, speak Yoruba. Being able to speak Hausa has enabled some members of the other ethnic groups to enhance their participation in the redistributive process, facilitating their sharing in both the Hausa proportion and their own ethnic proportion of the 'national cake'. Some Igbos have even adopted Hausa names in order to share in the 'spoils' of the state

¹⁵ Toyo, "National Languages and Development", op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Ben Elugbe, "Language Policy and National Development", op. cit., p. 7.

accruing to the Hausa group by virtue of their domination of the federal government. The reason for this pattern of multilingualism is not important. The question is: who is the better integrated citizen, he who speaks only one language, preferably the official language, or he who is able to manipulate several languages which are used for communication in the country?¹⁸ The present discursive practices in language usage should, then, be considered a blessing rather than a national curse. Through such practices a national language is likely to evolve in the future. The state may best serve its own interests by enabling such practices rather than sponsoring any kind of dramatic language reforms which are more likely to engineer perverse effects or have limited success.

HISTORY

The attempt to develop a shared historical basis for the Nigerian image stresses the fact that Nigerians must be the focus and principal actors in their history. This has entailed both the rejection of imperial history and ethnocentric European modes of historical study. Conventional European historiography has always been firmly based in written sources. Where these are absent is described as 'prehistory', and the beginning of a meaningful and interesting European history was for long dated from the appearance of a literary culture in classical Greece and Rome. Transposed to Africa, this conception of history condemns the pre-European past to an undifferentiated and uncivilized prehistory of no intrinsic interest. Imperial accounts of African history assumed that Africa did not have a history because its history was

¹⁸ Ayo Bamgbose, "Pride and Prejudice in Multilingualism and Development", paper presented at the Conference on African Languages, Development and the State, Centre of African Studies, University of London, SOAS, 25-26 April 1991, p. 1.

largely oral and not documented. Many Africans feel that to be denied a history is in some sense to be denied the dignity of being a people.¹⁹

The struggle for the acceptability of oral traditions as a viable and valid source of scholarly history began with the effort of African historians seeking the approval of the Senate of the University of London for their dissertations.²⁰ Their success enhanced the study not only of pre-colonial African history, but also of African languages, literatures, linguistics, religions and so on. It also meant that the new nationalist historiography, seeking to decolonize the minds of the masses about their past, realized that it had to learn from the established historians and to work within the framework that was acceptable to an international community.²¹ This integration of Nigerian national historiography into western historiography has placed undue stress on methodology, and not enough on interpretation. One result of this is that thirty years after independence, no one-volume interpretation of Nigerian national history by a Nigerian historian yet exists.²²

A major problem of nationalist historians is how to synthesize the histories of the various groups. Focusing attention on the histories of individual groups is potentially divisive. National history, therefore, emphasizes the history of intergroup relationships. Oral traditions, written records, ethnology and material culture, archaeology and linguistics, are all probed for evidence of intergroup linkages in myths

¹⁹ Kwame Nkrumah, Address delivered to mark the opening of the First International Congress of Africanists, cited in Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-building in East Africa*, Evanston Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1972, pp. 3-4.

²⁰ J.F. Ade. Ajayi, "National History in the Context of Decolonisation: the Nigerian Example", paper presented at University of Bergen, Norway, May 1990, p. 8.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 9.

of origins, commercial, religious and cultural exchanges. Ironically the attempt to synthesize Nigeria's history has been facilitated by a non-Nigerian, Thomas Hodgkin. In his epic historical anthology of Nigeria, he tried to show the links that existed in the pre-colonial period between the various states and peoples which were the predecessors of modern Nigeria.²³ Since the publication of Hodgkin's work, Nigerian historians have embarked on projects of historical synthesis. Simplified versions of synthesized Nigerian history have become the staple ingredient of history textbooks and teaching. Interestingly, Nigerian national history has been produced in print and in English which are neither indigenous nor African.

The lack of balance in the material on the various groups poses a problem of how to present a coherent picture of all the peoples. This difficulty has been evaded through the presentation of Nigerian history not as a single historical cultural organism but as a complex network of historical and ethnological strands of different lengths.²⁴ In its simplest form it is presented as glimpses of ancient Nigerian history beginning with the earliest known materials through the accounts of the Portuguese to the contact with the British, of which there is abundant documentary evidence. This approach presents no problem for the Nigerian image exactly because it is the principle of cultural nationalism to nationalize what is sectional as the property of the nation.

Significantly, attempts to nationalize sectional histories have not brought about accusations of domination. This may be because indigenous political achievements

²³ Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives: an Historical Anthology*, London, OUP, 1975, p. 2.

²⁴ J.D. Omer-Cooper, "The Question of Unity in African History", *JHSN*, Vol. III, No. 1, December 1964, p. 110.

and initiatives, and heroes of the disparate groups are equally glorified by nationalist history. Emphasis is placed on those events that demonstrate active resistance to colonialism, such as anti-tax riots, the celebrated Eleko case which led to the British occupation of Lagos, the Aba women's riot and the nationalist movement. Also, particular attention is paid to those indigenous initiatives which can be linked to contemporary affairs and people in Nigeria. For instance, Ologbosere, the great Benin warrior-chief, is claimed to be 'the fore-runner of men like General Obasanjo who would later advocate our Africanness in Nigeria'.²⁵ Ologbosere had massacred Consul-General Phillips who defiled the Oba of Benin with his visit. In retaliation the British sacked Benin and deported Oba Overamwen to Calabar.

Nationalist historiography denies that Nigeria is an artificial creation of the British. It depicts the country as originating from an immemorial and glorious past, through the present times to a limitless future. For instance, Eyo Ekpo's *2000 Years of Nigerian Art* presents an archaeologically informed view of Nigerian history, locating Nigerian history from 2000 years ago, even though the concept of Nigeria is very much a twentieth century one.²⁶

Nationalist history has been successful in promoting a national consensus among many educated Nigerians in relation to colonial and pre-colonial Nigeria. However, its success in promoting a national consensus about post colonial Nigeria remains to be seen.

²⁵ Atome Kunu, "The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria", in J.U. Obot (ed.), *Nigeria: the People and their Heritage*, Calabar, Wusen Press, 1987, p. 268.

²⁶ Eyo Ekpo, *2000 Years of Nigerian Art*, Lagos, Federal Department of Antiquities, 1979.

LITERATURE

Writing is relatively new in Nigeria. The very fact that there is a large body of Nigerian literature today is an indication of nationalism. In a society where creative literature is relatively new, and where this activity is invested with cultural prestige in response to western impact, the fact that people write at all becomes an act of national assertion.²⁷ The absence of writing in many parts of Nigeria prior to contact with Europeans has not deterred the Nigerian writer from claiming literature as his heritage. To acknowledge Eurocentric definitions of literature as the written word is to devalue and make inferior his culture. For him oral literature is respectable. In a lecture at the University of Calabar Philip Efiog claimed:

The origins of... Nigerian literary heritage cannot be traced to any definite period. This is so since the Nigerian, like man in every corner of the globe, has always existed in the company of one form of literature or the other.... literature is an artistic and skilful use of language to achieve effects on one's audience.... The key word here is language and whether it is 'spoken' through writing, speech, dance, mime, the drum etc, it eventually plays the same role in view of its artistic usage.²⁸

The large body of written creativity in Nigeria today is used to testify to the historicity of Nigerian literature. Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole

²⁷ Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-building in East Africa*, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸ Philip Efiog, "Tracing the Nigerian Literary Heritage", in J.U. Obot (ed.), *Nigeria: the People and their Heritage*, op. cit., p. 215.

Soyinka, the Nobel laureate, whose works are acclaimed internationally have become national heroes. Wole Soyinka's works are displayed with the caption 'The works that earned global recognition for Nigeria.'²⁹

Themes of Nigerian literature are inspired by nationalism. For example, Chinua Achebe's much acclaimed novel *Things Fall Apart* came out in 1958 in reaction to Joyce Cary's *Mr Johnson*, a novel which sought to depict the black man as slow witted.³⁰ A major nationalist concern of Nigerian literature has been the cultural conflicts between colonial ideals and traditional norms. Examples of such works include, *The Only Son* (1966) by John Munonye; *One Man, One Wife* (1965) by T.M. Aluko; *Heaven's Gate* a poem by Christopher Okigbo; *Pianos and Drums* by Okara; *Agbor Dance* by John P. Clark.

Another popular theme of Nigerian literary nationalism is cultural revivalism. This has been achieved through the idealization of indigenous culture. Such enterprise entails the use of traditional myths and imagery to project messages that reach beyond their immediate locality. Examples include Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964); Elechi Amadi's novels, *The Great Ponds* (1969), *The Concubine* (1966) and *The Slave* (1978); and J.P. Clarke's "The Song of a Goat" (1962). The literary nationalist attempts to link contemporary writing with past traditions and also 'to create works that can be described as being authentically Nigerian even though a 'foreign' medium is being used'.³¹ Only nationalism can create an authentically Nigerian literature in a medium foreign to Nigeria.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 214.

³⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*, London, Heinemann Educational, 1975, p. 45.

³¹ Efiog, "Tracing the Nigerian Literary Heritage", *op. cit.*, p. 220.

Nigerian nationalism has also been expressed in the thematic concern with political corruption in Nigeria. Such works invariably tie political corruption with neo-colonialism and imperialism. More recently such social conscience nationalism has found expression in examining the futility of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). By far the most forceful example of this nationalism is Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died*. It is a documentation of the writer's experiences in jail. The writer demonstrates powerfully the injustice and weaknesses inherent in his society, in particular the political structure of the society. Injustice and perversion of justice is also the theme of Aluko's *Wrong Ones in the Dock* (1982) and Joe Irukwu's *Nigeria: The case for a better Society*. The disenchantment shown in these works is taken to a new height by Chinua Achebe's *The Trouble With Nigeria* (1983) and *The Ant Hills of the Savannah* which is a lamentation of the ruin which military rule has brought to a developing country like Nigeria. Perhaps the best nationalistic achievements of *The Ant Hills of the Savannah* are the 'dissolution of tribalism, even if this in itself does not wipe away the vermin in real life, the demonstration that religion for the people is not, really a divisive issue, and the point that the common enemy [ethnicity] cannot be located among the ranks of the oppressed.'³²

One might wonder if these works do not express disenchantment with nationalism. The answer is no. Their major concern is for the Nigerian nation. For instance, Joe Irukwu claims that his book about Nigeria was written because of his 'faith in this country'.³³ It is not the stigmatization or the ridicule of nationalism that is the objective. Rather, it is the defence of nationalism from those seen as its

³² Chuks Iloegbunam, "The Soldier as an Ant", *Newswatch*, October 26, 1987, p. 54.

³³ *ThisWeek*, Lagos, February 12, 1990, p. 24.

enemies: the imperialists and their Nigerian collaborators.

Nigerian creative writers attempt to project Nigerian nationalism into a limitless future through literature specifically for children's readership. Such writings aim not only to open up the children's minds to creativity but to sharpen their awareness to significant national issues like civic responsibilities. Attempts to promote new trends in Nigerian nationalism can be witnessed in the emergence of pacesetter series literature in the manner of James Hadley Chase and Nick Carter. These are preoccupied with crime, adventure, fantasy, love, detective stories and glamour.

The great upsurge since the early 1970s in the number of Nigerian publishing houses attest to the growing importance of creative writing in nation building. Today there are over 70 publishing houses in Nigeria, a majority of them owned by Nigerians. Book fairs have become a common feature of Nigerian socio-economic life. Despite the proliferation of book fairs, books are never enough.³⁴ This increase in publishing is auspicious for Nigerian nationalism. The appreciation of literature in Nigeria is the result of education. Consequently, the increase in publishing will help to bridge the gap between education and upbringing in literary tastes. Almost half of the Nigerian population fall between the ages of 5-30 years. This means that sometime during formal education they are bound to be exposed to a number of the fast growing literature market. They, thereby, become influenced by the ideas expressed in the literature. In this way, literary elites will be crucial in shaping the eventual form of the imagined nation. They are the cultural creators of the national project. They help both Nigerians and non-Nigerians imagine the nation which, in Chinua Achebe's words, is

³⁴ *Newswatch*, Lagos, February 15, 1988, p. 37.

'morning yet on creation day'.³⁵

THE MEDIA

Until the late 1970s, the Nigerian press was largely owned by either the federal or state government. Today there is an upsurge in private ownership of the press, particularly of the print media. Radio and television are still owned by the state. This pattern of ownership has meant that the government controls to a great measure what is broadcast. For the government, the media is a means to communicate its policies to the people rather than a means through which people may reach it.

The promotion of unity has been the ultimate moral imperative of the Nigerian mass media, particularly radio and television. This may be due to the important role that the fledgling Nigerian press played in the nationalist movement. Tight government controls have been used to keep the press in line. Military regimes, in particular, have pursued the curtailment of press freedom as a policy. For example, Decree No. 4 enacted by General Buhari provided for a jail sentence on a journalist who published any article embarrassing to the Government or any of its functionaries, even if such a report was true. Another decree, No. 2, prohibited publications that smeared the good name of a government functionary or threatened the security of the state or incited citizens to riot. Other control measures include arbitrary detention of journalists and media executives, tight economic control on newsprint importation and distribution, and restriction of federal government adverts to government owned newspapers. The media gained considerable freedom following the overthrow of

³⁵ Wendy Griswold, "The Writing on the Mud Wall: Nigerian Novels and the Imaginary Village", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57, No. 6, December 1992, p. 713.

Buhari's government in August 1985. Decree No. 4 which had muzzled the press was repealed by President Babangida whose regime has continued to detain and harass journalists. However, the Buhari regime had taught journalists how to be cautious in their handling of sensitive national issues. This cautious nature of the press has given rise to laments that 'the soul and spirit of journalists' have left them.³⁶ Despite its limitations, the Nigerian press is the freest in Africa.

The idea of press control in Nigeria stems from fear that a completely free press may cause domestic strife and violent revolt. Although this fear has been ridiculed by the 'independent' press, it is not unfounded. Perhaps the most ghastly example of the danger of an irresponsible press is the 1966 radio broadcast which apparently ignited the second massacre of the Igbos in Northern Nigeria. The broadcast, initially transmitted from Cameroon and later by the northern-based Radio Kaduna, reported the killing of the Hausas in Eastern Nigeria by the Igbos. The North retaliated with what has been described as 'the most appalling cases of mass killing in contemporary Africa'.³⁷

Privately owned newspapers have more often promoted division than unity. Hence, there is need for government control of the press. On sensitive national issues the private press are partisan. Their campaigns for sectional interest often help to kindle passions rather than cool them. For instance, their reports on the religious riots in Kaduna State in 1987 were very irresponsible. Some newspapers went to the extent of highlighting demands by a Zaria-based clergyman, Alhaji Gumi, that Nigeria be broken into two, one for Christians and the other for Muslims. Editorials and reports

³⁶ *Newswatch*, Lagos, July 24, 1989, p. 42.

³⁷ Mazrui, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

were partisan and only helped to build up tension. Similarly, in 1986 during the controversy over the government decision to enrol Nigeria as a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, sectional press campaigns fuelled passions and built up tension which caused serious problems for the Babangida administration.

The press itself recognizes the need for control. A journalist pleaded with President Babangida to use lawful and democratic means to discipline the press for the sake of the nation, pointing out that 'respect for fundamental human rights surely has its limits with regards to the unity of the nation.'³⁸ Dan Agbese, an editor of *Newswatch*, agrees that the Nigerian press can be 'bad news' for Nigeria:

A non-Nigerian reading the country's newspapers and magazines is bound to conclude that there are several wars going on in the country... Every positive move government has made is gratuitously greeted with a barrage of negativism by the press. Its diabolical aim is to prove that no matter how hard they crow about it no one, no Nigerian government, be it civilians or the armed forces, has enough love for the country to make it worth the while of the Andrews to stay on this side of the Atlantic.³⁹

One area of the media which the government has apparently failed to seriously consider is satellite broadcasting. Government failure to acquire the new satellite technology has given rise to increasing nationalist concern that national values will be

³⁸ *Hotline*, Kaduna, April 30, 1987, p. 38.

³⁹ Dan Agbese, "On the sunny Side", *Newswatch*, Lagos, March 7, 1988, p. 54.

eroded, and replaced by western values beamed directly into Nigerian homes.⁴⁰ Despite understandable financial constraints, this lacuna in its media policy weakens the claim of government to be primarily concerned with the promotion of national unity. Failure to control (at least in part) modern forms of media, and failure to provide an alternative to western programmes, can only weaken national identity. The Nigerian media is basically western-oriented in style, values and conventions. The very titles of national dailies are mostly imported from Fleet Street. Nationalists call for the mass media to experiment with an indigenous 'alternative journalism'.⁴¹

If the government was to effectively utilize the mass media it could enhance its legitimacy, public comprehension of its policies, and citizens' political socialization. The fact that a majority of the press, including all radio and television houses are government owned makes the mass media a powerful instrument for political development although this also carries with it the inherent danger of exploitation for thought control and demagoguery.⁴² However, the government has failed to fully exploit the propaganda potential of either newspapers or electronic communications. The way in which it has employed such media has been simplistic and minimal, as in repeated broadcasting of the National Pledge, 'Thought for Today' and 'Moment for Thought'. Until it does exploit that potential, official nationalism is unlikely to become a truly popular force.

⁴⁰ Babatunde Folarin; "The Media's First Task", *Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan, Wednesday, 11 April 1990, p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴² David R. Smock and Kwamena Bentsi-Enchill, *The Search for National Integration*, New York, Free Press, 1976, p. 166.

ART FESTIVALS

Nigerian governments have been more adept at exploiting traditional media, such as dance, songs, poetry. These function primarily as entertainment, but are also used in demonstrations of public support for government policies. As such, they complement modern forms of demonstration, like military reviews at national celebrations. In particular, traditional media have been utilized as vehicles of unity through art festivals.

The First World Negro Festival of the Arts held in Dakar in 1966 made Nigerian government aware of the potentiality of art festivals for national image-making. Because Nigeria was seen as the source of Negro art and culture, she was elected in 1965 to perform as the 'Star Country' in the festival but her performance was undistinguished. More particularly, the shoddy display of the ancient treasures of Nigeria reduced their importance as an assertion of Africa's proud past.⁴³

Nigeria performed badly again at the first Pan-African cultural festival in Algiers in 1969. Although the first All-Nigeria Festival of Arts was held in Lagos to prepare a team for the festival, what resulted was cultural chaos. The Federal Military Government saw the event as a platform to present Nigeria as a united and indivisible country.⁴⁴ An Igbo man, Ben Enwonwu, was invited from Europe to lead the Nigerian delegation and *Atiliogwu* dancers from the liberated areas of Biafra were despatched to Algiers to join the Nigerian contingent of artistes. Cultural synthesis was not considered significant. What mattered most was the representation of the various

⁴³ J.A. Adedeji, "Culture as Reagents of Nigeria's National Identity", in Kayode and Usman (eds.) *The Economic and Social Development of Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 293.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 293.

Nigerian culture areas in one delegation, in particular the representation of the break-away section of Nigeria.

The experience changed government attitude towards arts and culture. Government realized that the basis of unity could be built with a well articulated cultural policy. The cultural division in the federal ministry of information was given a new orientation and the Nigerian Arts Council was reconstituted and made an agent in the process of promoting national unity. The All-Nigerian Festival of the Arts was renamed 'Festival of Unity'. To ensure equality and full participation of the states in the festival, the venue for the yearly event was to be rotated among the states of the federation. A measure of competition was introduced in order to encourage innovation. State governments and some multinational corporations made contributions towards the trophies for competitive events. These are a set of gongs cast in gold, silver and bronze. A giant gold gong was donated by the head of state for the overall winning state. This gold gong became the symbol of national identity and unity.

In 1972 the Arts Council inaugurated the State Week Festival in the capital. The aim was to display the efforts of each state towards cultural promotion and development. Each state was to plan its own festival, and design its own criteria for the promotion of culture. The festival drew attention to the commercial benefits of arts and culture for trade fairs. The ministry of trade used the opportunity to recruit cultural troupes for side shows at its fairs and in particular, for the First All African Trade Fair in Nairobi in 1972. As a result, cultural side shows have become a regular feature at trade fairs, national parades and sporting events as well as for welcoming visiting dignitaries to Nigeria.

The new orientation for the All Nigeria Festival of Arts had positive effects for

nation building. Apart from bringing culture to a new level of consciousness, it helped to produce a new attitude to cultural administration and planning. The exercise of staging festivals required the recruitment of trained personnel and a process of talent hunting. Graduates of the Schools of Art, Drama and Music began to be employed as cultural officers. Both contemporary and traditional artistes had gainful employment in promoting traditional arts to new levels of appreciation.⁴⁵

The experience gained from the organization of art festivals in the country gave the state the confidence to host the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. About 56 countries participated. Critics of FESTAC have pointed out that it neither led to a unifying ideal for the black world in general nor for Nigeria in particular.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the event provided the occasion for the display of Nigerian nationalism, an 'us' versus them feeling.

National consciousness was reflected in the citizens' willingness and enthusiasm to prove Nigeria's greatness as the most endowed black country in the world. Such a spirit was most expressed in the controversy over the FESTAC symbol, the Benin Mask. Nigeria had asked Britain to return the famous ivory mask from the British Museum for the festival and Britain refused. Nigerians united in their condemnation of Britain. A comment on Lagos radio reflected the national mood on the issue:

The excuse that Nigeria cannot be allowed to keep what rightfully belongs to

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 296.

⁴⁶ See for example, Femi Osofisan, "FESTAC and the Heritage of Ambiguity", in O. Oyediran (ed.), *Survey of Nigerian Affairs, 1976-1977*, Ibadan, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and Macmillan, 1981, p. 33.

her because the object is in a fragile condition is as baseless as it is deceitful. The intention of Britain .. is primarily to discredit Nigeria and .. the collective attempt by the black people to re-educate the world on the positive contributions of the black man to the entire human experience which the white man arrogates to himself.... To us, the rightful owners such objects have spiritual as well as religious values considering our cultural background. .. What we resent is not only that these sacred objects are often misused but also that they are meaningless to those who keep them. .. the same people who deny that the black man neither has a history nor a personality continue to make huge fortunes from our works of art. Besides, like the British example, the white man is out to obliterate any traces of black civilization from any known historical records. This is putting British stubbornness to return our art objects in its true perspective. ...As a matter of fact that 16th century ivory mask from Benin has been recognized all over the world as one of the finest examples of the creative ingenuity of the black man. The mask was last worn by Oba Overami who was forced out of his throne when the British attacked and plundered the Benin empire in 1897. The background to that senseless attack was the white man's greed to exploit the natural potentials of the black man.⁴⁷

If I have quoted at length, it is because the issues raised in the commentary portray forcefully the elements of Nigerian cultural nationalism, that is anti-colonialist/imperialist feeling, nationalization of fame, idealization of African and indigenous cultures, and

⁴⁷ Commentary by Odnaki Okeni on Lagos Radio, November 2, 1976, reported in *Africa Currents*, London, no. 8, spring, 1977, p. 25-26.

indigenization of foreign ideas. It does not matter that the famous mask originates from the Bini group; it is 'ours'. Of all the cultural artifacts in the Nigerian museum none was found worthy to be used as a symbol. Rather, the famous one on display at the British Museum was chosen. It does not matter that it was the white man who judged 'the ivory mask as one of the finest examples of the creative ingenuity of the black man' and thereby made it famous.

A replica of the mask was made in Benin and presented to the Head of State for use when Nigeria failed to persuade the British Government to relinquish the original. The importance attached to the FESTAC symbol as an image for Nigerian nationhood is evidenced by the expulsion of two expatriates, a Frenchman and an American, for not respecting the symbol.⁴⁸ The nationalization of ethnic culture was also evident in the choice of the *Durbar* from the emirates of northern Nigeria and the *Regatta* from the peoples of the Niger delta and the riverine areas as highlights of Nigeria's contribution to the festival. These two spectacular and colourful events were described by General Obasanjo as 'peculiarly Nigerian'.⁴⁹

In general, FESTAC gave Nigeria the opportunity to present an image of national culture that was representative of its constituent ethnic cultures. The famous Benin Mask, the *Durbar*, and the *Regatta* were carefully balanced with other less spectacular art forms from around the country. It is the most eminent example of the way in which the state has attempted to present a national culture as an amalgam of traditional cultures, unified by carefully chosen symbols. The FESTAC is thus

⁴⁸ *West Africa*, London, January 10, 1977, p. 86.

⁴⁹ Addresses by General Obasanjo, at the opening of the Regatta, January 25, 1977, in Lagos and at the Durbar, February 8, 1977, in Kaduna, in *A March of Progress: Collected Speeches of His Excellency, General Olusegun Obasanjo*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, pp. 107 and 108.

interesting in showing the selective processes of cultural nationalism.

In general, cultural integration in Nigeria has made substantive gains. National integration has been achieved through clothing. There is no one national dress but through the predominant sporting of Hausa fashion at international sporting events Nigerians are increasingly being Hausaized without resistance. The *agbada or babariga* is now a national dress, largely identified with the rich, particularly with politicians. The Igbos, who more than any other major ethnic group adopted European dress, are now readopting traditional fashions. Wearing traditional clothing to work at the office is today very common practice. New and eclectic Nigerian fashions are emerging, especially among the young. This is a positive sign for national integration.

Inter-ethnic marriages are now more common and acceptable than before the civil war. The fact that many high ranking officers have married outside their ethnic groups can be regarded as an indicator for this change. For instance, President Babangida, a Hausa, is married to an Igbo woman. Inter-ethnic nuptial relations were a major post-war feature as federal soldiers, especially Hausas, 'captured' Igbo girls as wives. Igbo girls were regarded by Hausa soldiers as social assets.

The diversified nature of Nigerian literary culture is promoting a broadly based sort of nationalism. Great works of literature by the likes of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, exist side by side with low-brow pamphlet literature.⁵⁰ The popularity of this literature may be appreciated from its humorous dimensions displayed in colourful and attractive titles like: *Why Boys Don't Trust Their GirlFriends; Money Hard to get But Easy To Spend; Beware of Harlots and Many Friends; Beautiful Maria in the Act of*

⁵⁰ This literature is more generally known as Onitsha Market literature.

True Love; Veronica My Daughter, How to Avoid Enemies and Bad Company etc. The productivity and impact of this literary enterprise is high. In Onitsha market on any one day there are about sixty different pamphlets on sale on all topics.⁵¹ Its readership is wide including both elementary and secondary school children as well as drop-outs from these two school systems.

Cultural nationalists are proud of this literature, despite its substandard nature. It is regarded as the first literature that attempted to deal with current Nigerian issues, in other words the first literature with national outlook.⁵² Interestingly the same pride is not extended to Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, the first Nigerian literary attempt written in 1952. It was acclaimed abroad as a great achievement in creative fantasy and unusual diction. Cultural nationalists see it as 'ironical' that it was applauded despite being written in substandard English.⁵³ The spirit of cultural nationalism resents such foreign applause as insulting and patronizing.

The Yoruba *juju* music and its *Owambe* dance has national appeal. The 'high life' music which was popular in the 'sixties has been superseded by Western-style 'pop' music which is now veritably popular amongst Nigerian youth. National television soaps like *Cockcrow At Dawn, Village Headmaster, Behind The Clouds, Mirror In The Sun, Masquerade*, etc. are providing many Nigerians with common cultural and social experiences to learn and share.

⁵¹ Emmanuel N. Obiechina (ed.), *Onitsha Market Literature*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1972, p. 9.

⁵² Philip U. Efiog, "Tracing the Nigeria Literary Heritage", op. cit., p. 217.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 217-218.

Christianity and Islam have been indigenized.⁵⁴ As Parrinder has observed, indigenized sects are a large factor in the religious situation of the country.⁵⁵ Members worship in ways that are peculiarly Nigerian. They pray and sing to God in Nigerian languages and dance joyfully to African tunes and rhythms. Most of the sects permit polygyny and boast of many prophets, some of whom claim to be Jesus reincarnated. Many of these churches have branches in Europe, Russia, and the USA. Traditional religion is now being revived by intellectuals, particularly university lecturers, who see it as an alternative to the two imported religions - Christianity and Islam - currently agitating Nigerian nationalism.

The Nigerian Pidgin is a major integrative factor. It is widely spoken in both urban and rural areas and, by educated and uneducated alike. Unfortunately, it is not recognized officially by government. Pidgin is an auspicious development for Nigerian nationalism in two ways: firstly, it is the only language original to Nigeria. The four languages being promoted by the government are group specific. Secondly, it provides a solution to the political and educational costs of adopting a four tier national language structure.

National pride is asserted through personal names. British- style names are being dropped. Christians now give their children traditional ethnic names at baptism. Previously, such an act would have been condemned as 'pagan' practice. Perhaps the most famous example of this assertion of traditional identity is Fela Anikulakpo-Kuti, the controversial Nigerian musician, who in his fight against 'colonial mentality'

⁵⁴ The Africanisation of Christian worship began in the late 19th century with the secession of a group of Nigerians from the Anglican church to form the United Native African Church (UNA).

⁵⁵ Parrinder Geoffrey, *Religion in an African City*, London, OUP, 1953, p. 132.

changed his family name from Ransome-Kuti to Anikulakpo-Kuti.⁵⁶ A prominent politician of the First Republic, Mbonu Ojike, advocated the nationalist principle of 'boycott of the boycottables', rejecting the title 'Mr.' as anti-Nigerian and substituting it with the Igbo equivalent *Mazi*.⁵⁷ The rejection of foreign names was boosted during the Second Republic when Sir Akanu Ibiam (knighted by Queen Elizabeth) led a group of Nigerians to burn their foreign names at a bonfire in Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos.⁵⁸

The name Nigeria evokes national pride. There were suggestions that the name be discarded, because of its British connection. The names *Songhai*, from the past and *Wazobia*, fabricated from the three major Nigerian languages, were suggested as alternatives. But the majority view is that Nigeria is such an appropriate name that the British cannot claim a copyright: it comes from Nigritia, the land of the blacks, and Nigeria has the largest concentration of black people. It also reflects the country's most prominent physical feature, the River Niger. The identity is therefore borne with pride. The adoption of English as an official language has however been less acceptable and is a matter of political expediency. But the humiliation has been borne with the contention that English has become so universal that the British no longer have the copyright.⁵⁹ Cultural nationalists point to Wole Soyinka's work in English which won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1987 as proof of their claim to the

⁵⁶ Colonial mentality is the belief that everything European is the best. It was the subject of a song by Fela Anikulakpo-Kuti.

⁵⁷ Atome Kunu, "The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria", in J.U. Obot (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 277.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 277.

⁵⁹ J.F. Ade. Ajayi, "National History in the Context of Decolonization", *op. cit.*, p. 5.

language.⁶⁰ Nigerian nationalism certainly has to be understood in relation both to its traditional ethnic cultures and British culture.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND RELIGIOUS POLICIES

Introduction

The links between religion and nationalism can be very close. In Poland, Ireland, Armenia, Israel, Iran and Sudan, religion reinforces nationalism. English nationalism was closely reinforced by the Church of England. In eighteenth-century England only members of the Church of England were enfranchised.¹ It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that all religious barriers to membership of the House of Commons were removed.² Connor Cruise O'Brien has shown how the French and American nationalism were underpinned by religion.³ Winthrop Hudson argued that the sense of nationalism in the US cannot be understood without taking into account its religious heritage.⁴ In Nigeria, Christianity helped in the movement for independence. The United Native African Church, which broke away from the orthodox Anglican Church, played an important role in the agitation for independence. However, the Nigerian state did not adopt a state religion on independence. Rather, it continued the colonial policy of neutrality in religious affairs. The existence of religious cleavages did not create difficult political problems for Nigeria until the late 1970s when the cleavage between Islam and Christianity became increasingly conflictual. This is the

¹ Anthony Birch, *Nationalism and National Integration*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 43.

² *Ibidem*, p. 43.

³ Connor Cruise O'Brien, *God Land: Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 43-63.

⁴ Winthrop S. Hudson (ed.), *Nationalism and Religion in America: Concepts of American Identity and Mission*, New York, Harper & Row, 1970, *passim*.

first time that there has ever been serious rivalry, let alone widespread and violent conflict, between the two religious groups in the history of the territory that now comprises Nigeria.

I shall argue that recent religious conflict is largely an unintended consequence of federal government policy. A series of Muslim-led governments contravened formally the secular basis of the state by implementing policies which were widely perceived as favourable to Islam and by extension to the dominant Muslim Hausa/Fulani group. Such policies both raised Muslim expectations and provoked Christian animosity, leading to increasing political activity on both sides. Commentators have claimed that Nigeria has become polarized between 'Christian Nigerians and Muslim Nigerians',⁵ and asked whether the country is heading 'for a religious war that will destroy the basis of its existence as a nation-state?'⁶ Such writers clearly believe that religious cleavage is supplanting ethnicity as the basis of people's political identities and therefore obstructing the growth of national identity and cohesion.

In passing, it should be noted that popular political expression through religious organizations has also been encouraged by the military's banning of political parties from the beginning of 1984, and since then of other civil organizations which challenged governmental policies.⁷ The recent creation of two national and secular parties once again permits more conventional forms of political activity, and may

⁵ A.E. Ekoko and L.O. Amadi, "Religion and Stability in Nigeria", in J.A. Atanda et al. (eds.), *Nigeria since Independence: the First 25 Years, Volume IX, Religion*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational, 1989, p. 130.

⁶ *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 8, 1990, p. 42.

⁷ Matthew Hassan Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation: a case Study of the Religious Riots in Kaduna State, Nigeria", paper presented at the International Conference on Religion and Protest in Africa, Cornell University, Ithaca, 25-7th April, 1991, p. 26-27.

therefore be expected to detract from the politicisation of religion. Certain claims about the danger posed to national unity by the religious cleavage might therefore be thought to be premature, although it cannot be doubted that religious issues continue to be a volatile factor in Nigerian politics.

In this chapter I shall concentrate upon government policies on religious issues, and popular reactions to them.

RELIGION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: BACKGROUND

Religion has always played an important role in the life of all the peoples of Nigeria. There is little or no formal distinction between the secular and the sacred. In pre-colonial times, the political, social and economic system was legitimated by religion. Religious beliefs, practices and forms of authority differed from group to group, and were largely accommodating rather than formalized, structured or hierarchical.

The coming of Islam and Christianity introduced radically different forms of religious organization to the territory that now comprises Nigeria. Both claimed that their differing doctrines expressed universal truth, motivating them to proselytize to others and to impose uniformity of belief amongst themselves. Such doctrinal uniformity was imposed by formally structured and usually hierarchical religious organizations.

Islam spread to Nigeria from across the Sahara. It reinforced the theocratic system in the northern areas where it took root and came to be closely associated with the Hausa/Fulani groups. Christianity spread from the coast, becoming well established among the southern peoples. Unlike Islam, it did not provide the basis for

a theocracy, but drew a distinction between the sacred and the secular. However, it was accompanied by elements of western culture and education and it paved the way for colonial rule which exercised its power through existing political structures. Thus traditional rulers such as *Caliphs, Emirs, Obas, Obis, or Ezes* continued to act as both political and religious heads of their people.

Colonial rule promoted Christianity (outside the Emirates) and used it as an agent for its 'civilizing mission'. The administrators guarded the north from Christian missionary influence in honour of the pledge made to the Fulani rulers that they would not interfere with religious practice in the area.⁸ However, in the 1930s the administration cautiously opened up the north to western influence by allowing Christian missions to run leper colonies throughout the northern provinces and to proselytize in the middle belt areas. The close cooperation between colonial officials and missionaries in the south enabled Christianity to enjoy one of the fastest growth rates in its history.⁹ Later, Christianity helped in the movement for Nigerian independence, the first Nationalists being clergymen or religiously active laymen like W.E. Cole and Edward Blyden.

The colonial state was officially neutral on religion. Its policy was one of tolerance and non-involvement in religious issues which it regarded as a 'private' matter. It did, however, recognize the central role of religion in the lives of the various peoples in the north/south division of its administration and in its legacy of the three-regional federal structure at independence.

⁸ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in an African City*, London, OUP, 1953, pp. 63-64 and 83.

⁹ Jibrin Ibrahim, "Politics of Religion in Nigeria: the Parameters of the 1987 Crisis in Kaduna State", *ROAPE*, 45-46, 1989, p. 74.

Religion became politicised in the run up to independence as the Nigerian leaders used it to compete for public opinion. For instance, the pilgrimage issue, which started out as a matter of facilitating the movement of pilgrims through Sudan to Saudi Arabia became a central concern of the leader of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarkin Sokoto. Bello, who was also the premier of the Northern Region, set up a Pilgrims Welfare Board as a corporate organ of his government to alleviate the sufferings of pilgrims to Mecca. Shortly after, the leader of the Action Group (AG) and premier of the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, also set up a similar board in his office. The real motive behind the decision of the two premiers was neither humanitarian nor religious:

For Bello, it was an opportunity to demonstrate his religious commitment to Islam and to live up to expectations of his allies in the Muslim world.... In the case of Chief Awolowo, a Christian, the establishment of a Pilgrim Welfare Board was a political strategy to stop the Muslims from forming a rival political party in the Region.¹⁰

Not to be outdone, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the National Convention of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), sponsored a religious sect called the National Church of Nigeria and the Cameroons which preached about an African god.¹¹

On independence, the colonial policy of non-involvement was adopted as the

¹⁰ Oloso K.K., *Hajj and its Operation in Nigeria 1954-1980*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1985, cited in P.R.A. Adegbesan, "Pragmatic Involvement in Religious Matters: a case Study of Nigeria", in Stephen Olugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Political Futures for Nigeria*, Lagos, Nigerian Political Science Association, 1987, p. 102.

¹¹ Parrinder, *Religion in an African City*, op. cit., 1953, p. 128.

basis of the secularity of the Nigerian state. This secular status of the state was implicit in the constitution's silence on religion, apart from guaranteeing freedom of worship. The missionaries remained in control of educational, health care and welfare institutions most of which were government-aided. Religion was manipulated by politicians for vote but it did not dominate national politics. Ethnicity dominated national politics. However, the political situation in the Northern Region was so integrated with Islam that separation was impossible.¹² The major northern issues were control of federal power and catching up with the south in socio-economic development. These were expressed by the ruling NPC through a strong 'northernization' programme especially in high level jobs.¹³ But the line between this northernization and Islamization was not a distinct one. The Muslim culture was given superordinate status while the non-Muslim areas were subjugated under the system.¹⁴ Non-Muslim officials of the regional government could not rise above the junior levels. This, and the fact that Bello was committed to the Islamization of all Nigeria engendered fear and resentment among non-Muslims and became a justification for the January 1966 military coup and the following civil war.¹⁵

During the war religion was manipulated to the benefit of both sides. Biafran leaders depicted the conflict as a Muslim/Christian one.¹⁶ This helped them to gain

¹² Dean S. Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam: Religious Change in Northern Nigeria*, Lanham, University Press of America, 1986, p. 158.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

¹⁴ Tseayo J.I., *Conflict and Incorporation in Nigeria: the Integration of the Tiv, Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation*, 1975, p. 112.

¹⁵ Ben Gbulie, *Nigeria's Five Majors: Coup D'etat of 15th January 1966, First Inside Account*, Onitsha, Africana Educational Publishers, 1981, p. 52.

¹⁶ Abdurrahman I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation, 1984, pp. 345-346.

favourable international opinion, winning for them the sympathy and support of Catholic countries, especially the Irish and the French governments.¹⁷ Nigerian leaders on the other hand used the fact that the head of state was a Christian (Gowon, an Anglican) to show the non-religious nature of the war. This factor helped to reassure non-Muslims and to win support for the war effort from northern and western Christians as well as from the eastern minorities.

POST-WAR RELIGIOUS POLICIES: SECULARIZATION OF EDUCATION

Education became secularized after the war.¹⁸ The prevailing educational system which was controlled by religious bodies was considered inadequate for mobilization and indoctrination for nationalism.¹⁹ The federal government therefore took control of schools and hospitals from religious bodies most of which were Christian, despite their opposition. Religious education was still allowed to continue after government take-over of schools. The teaching of religion and moral education was therefore not considered antithetical to nationalism.

In general, the secularization of schools was a haphazard exercise. It caused a lot of discontent among Christian missions, particularly in the north where some schools taken over from Christians were rebaptized with Muslim names and given

¹⁷ L. Wiseberg, "Christian Churches and the Nigerian Civil War", *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 2(3), 1975, p. 324.

¹⁸ The take-over of mission schools was first initiated by the state governments during the war. The split between the 'Biafran' and Nigerian churches enabled the state governments to take-over clinics, schools and hospitals belonging to predominantly Igbo churches in the country.

¹⁹ Jacob K. Olupona, "Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria: Then and Now", paper presented to the Oxford African Society Seminar, Oxford University, January 27, 1988, p. 15.

Islamic identities.²⁰ Most Igbo people saw the policy as both a punitive measure against the missions for their support of Biafra and a prelude to the eventual Islamization of the country, particularly of the Igbo people.²¹ Professor of Islamic study at the Ahmadu Bello University, Abdurrahman Doi, regards secularization as beneficial to Islam. According to him, 'this policy has given freedom to Islam to further its cause and in a way it imposed restrictions on Christianity which has so far dominated the educational and social scene of the country'.²² Because of the policy, Christian missions came together and formed the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to defend Christianity in Nigeria.²³

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES FOR HAJJ

More Nigerians performed the Hajj in the 1970s due to the oil boom. It was estimated that 106,000 Nigerian Muslims went to Mecca in 1977. This means that after Indonesians, more Nigerians performed the Hajj than any other nationality.²⁴

The federal government became partially involved in the Hajj in 1972. It established an office in the external affairs ministry to coordinate the activities of the various State Pilgrim Welfare Boards which were responsible for pilgrims from their respective States.²⁵ Full involvement followed in 1975 with the establishment of the

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

²² Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 344.

²³ Jibrin Ibrahim, "Politics of Religion in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 76.

²⁴ Peter B. Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria: a Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State 1960-1983*, Mainz/Munich, Kaiser-Grunewald, 1984, p. 62.

²⁵ Before then only those States carved out of the former Western and Northern Regions were involved in the Hajj.

National Pilgrim Board (N.P.B) to subsidize the pilgrimage to Mecca. This decision to become involved in a purely Islamic matter was motivated by the need to protect the country's image abroad following embarrassing reports about the activities of unscrupulous Nigerians in the holy land, and to check the abuse of national resources through currency trafficking and smuggling.

Subsequent governments continued to treat Hajj operations as normal government responsibilities. These operations became notorious for the favours granted to eminent individuals and for the political rewards given to converts to Islam who make the journey.²⁶ Public funds were spent on each pilgrim, not only in infrastructure and social assistance, but also in foreign reserves made available at artificially low rates.²⁷ Christians were incensed by what they saw as the misuse of the nation's wealth, especially in the light of the numerical strength of Christianity and demanded that the same opportunity be given to them.²⁸ They were eventually granted their own Christian Pilgrim Boards or representations on existing boards. However, they were granted a quota of 1,400 pilgrims against the 20,000 for Muslims. This imbalance itself became a major grievance for Christians.

The 1986 foreign exchange regulations which abolished pilgrim privileges has helped to defuse the pilgrimage issue as a source of conflict. However, the fact that federal funds could be used to provide travel to Muslims demonstrated how powerful the Islamic forces were at the highest levels of government. The sending of whole delegations at government expense produced the erroneous impression that Islam was

²⁶ Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam*, op. cit., p. 193.

²⁷ John Onaiyekan, Bishop of Ilorin, "Secularism and the Nigerian State", paper presented at ABU, Zaria, July 11, 1987, p. 10.

²⁸ Gilliland, op. cit., p. 193.

the state religion of Nigeria.²⁹ The special irony though is that the policy was introduced during the regime of a Christian, that is Gowon.

RELIGIOUS BALANCING

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime advanced religious balancing as a deliberate strategy for strengthening nationalism. Ministerial appointments and top positions were carefully balanced according to the religious affiliation of those appointed. For example, in 1974 when General Obasanjo, a Yoruba and a Christian, succeeded Mohammed, his second-in-command had to come from the north to maintain the balance. However, his next in command was Lieutenant General Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma, a northerner who was also a Christian. He was disqualified. The position could only be occupied by someone who was both a northerner and a Muslim. Religion thus grew in political saliency. It was therefore not by chance that religion threatened national stability during the Obasanjo regime. The context was the 1978 debate on the draft constitution. The issue was the place of the Sharia (Islamic law) in the new constitution.

In the Second Republic most political parties ensured that candidates for the two top posts in the country, that is the presidency and vice-presidency, were balanced between a Christian and a Muslim. This policy was further reflected in the accord between the NPN and the NPP. Both parties agreed 'to maintain complete equality in state contribution and treatment of all religious groups'.³⁰ They also agreed that government would not discriminate against foreign missionaries of any

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 193.

³⁰ Olupona, "Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria", *op. cit.*, p. 21.

faith wishing to establish educational or health care institutions.³¹ This agreement effectively abolished the previous military ban on foreign missionary activity in Nigeria. The apogee of religious balancing was the historic visits to Nigeria of Pope John Paul II, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Chief Imam of Mecca in 1982.

Certain factors complicate the government's balancing act. These include the holistic approach of Islam, the importance of religion in the lives of Nigerians, and the nature of Nigerian politics as 'sharing of the national cake'. The constitution, despite its secular provisions, does not require leaders at federal or state levels to put away their religion until the end of their terms of office. The series of Muslim-led governments since 1979, and the implementation of policies widely perceived as favourable to Islam, has generated fears among non-Muslims, especially Christians, that there are plans to Islamize Nigeria. As a result of such fears, Christians are now poised to stop what they regard as 'creeping Islamization' in Nigeria.³²

THE SECULAR STATUS OF THE STATE

Interpreting the constitutional provisions about the secular nature of Nigeria was a central issue at the 1978 Constituent Assembly. Opposition to secularism came largely from Muslims who argued that it would make state involvement in religious matters such as pilgrimages and the Sharia unconstitutional. Muslim fundamentalist groups, in particular the Muslim Students Society, argued for the creation of a truly Islamic state as the solution to immorality and corruption in Nigeria. Non-Muslims argued in support of secularism. Socialists argued that religion had no place in a

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

³² *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 8, 1990, p. 42.

secular state. Christians argued that it would be unfair for the state to favour one religion in view of its religious pluralism, suggesting that the state should provide a context in which all religions would flourish.

The final draft of the Constitution did not declare Nigeria a secular state. However, it guaranteed freedom of religious worship and declared Nigeria God's land. In the Preamble Nigerians are held to have agreed 'to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God'. The neutrality of the state in religious matters was affirmed. Article 10 stated that 'the Government of the Federation or of the State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion'. The Constitution did not, however, spell out the conditions or limits to such neutrality. For instance, it does not say whether it includes aid to pilgrims or donations to religious organizations or the involvement of the state in the observance of religious holidays.

THE SHARIA DEBATE

The debate on the role and place of the Sharia in the new constitution was more explosive. The proposal to create a federal court of appeal generated a bitter exchange at the assembly. Muslim members argued that such a court was fundamentally Christian in origin and demanded a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal. For many Muslims Sharia court of appeal was the symbol of political freedom.³³ Christians protested that such a court compromised the secular nature of the state. For them such a move symbolized potential Muslim domination of Nigeria.³⁴ The

³³ David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

debate resulted in religious riots.

Muslim representatives led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari staged a walk-out in protest against the defeat of the Sharia proposal. This engendered a new wave of protests and demonstrations from the public, some in support and some against the Sharia. The head of state, General Obasanjo, intervened to halt the debate. What finally emerged in the 1979 Constitution was a compromise in which the English and Islamic judicial systems were juxtaposed. Existing Sharia courts were sanctioned. New ones could be established in states that required them by parliamentary resolution and confirmation by the state governor. Jibrin Ibrahim observes that this dual legal system is most undesirable for Nigerian unity.³⁵

The Sharia debate was planned by the Hausa/Fulani ruling elite to promote its political ambitions for the Second Republic.³⁶ Islam has been a useful tool enabling the group to maintain political power in post-colonial Nigeria. During the First Republic they achieved this through Islamization policies disguised as northernization policies. To regain power after the January 1966 military coup, the group 'quickly cast its interests against a wider spectrum by arguing for the need to guard "northern interests".³⁷ Northern interests was only a euphemism for Islamic interests. The oligarchy reasoned that their power would be assured in the Second Republic if the old Northern Region could unite under the Muslim banner. That hope was dashed. They had not reckoned with the new political and social structures that had developed in the region as a result of the creation of more states. The irony is that the debate

³⁵ Ibrahim, "The Politics of Religion in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 77.

³⁶ See Chapter 4, Matthew Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, SOAS, 1989.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 7

was initiated to mobilize Muslims but it instead became the rallying point for Christians.³⁸

The Sharia issue again dominated the Constituent Assembly inaugurated in May 1988 to deliberate on political arrangements for the Third Republic. Muslims wanted a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal to be established as well as the extension of the Sharia law to the southern States. Christians did not only oppose this motion, they wanted the gains the Muslims made in the 1979 Constitution to be removed. The debate became very bitter, generating fears of a religious conflict spreading from the assembly to the entire country. History repeated itself as President Babangida intervened to halt the debate. This intervention can 'merely postpone the evil day'.³⁹ What is thought, by both sides, to be at stake in the Sharia issue is which religious group will possess the state.

RELIGIOUS EDIFICES FOR THE NEW CAPITAL

The federal government under Shagari gave a grant of 10 million naira to Muslims in 1982 to build a national mosque in Abuja.⁴⁰ Christians protested against Shagari's action and were made a similar offer which up till now has not been honoured by the state.⁴¹ John Onaiyekan, Bishop of Ilorin, observed that it was 'a lame excuse' to delay payment to Christians because not all of them belong to the Christian Association of Nigeria, pointing out that there was no similar demand for

³⁸ Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam*, op. cit., p. 188.

³⁹ *Newswatch*, Lagos, December 12, 1988, p. 20.

⁴⁰ On assumption of office, Murtala Mohammed had similarly built a mosque at the State House, Dodan Barracks, but made no provision for a Christian place of worship.

⁴¹ Onaiyekan, "Secularism and the Nigerian State", op. cit., p. 10.

unanimity in the Muslim fold before their money was paid out.⁴² In defence of the government decision to fund the building of religious houses, the minister of internal affairs, Col. John Shagaya, observed that government 'thought it would be good to assist in providing funds to develop edifices that will serve not only for religious worship but also as monuments in our new federal capital, Abuja'.⁴³ Such religious symbolism appears to belie the claim that Nigeria is veritably a secular state.

THE 'FUNDAMENTALIST' BACKLASH

In the Second Republic Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented religious uprising in Kano in 1980. An Islamic sect called Maitatsine caused riots in which at least 5000 people died, including the leader of the sect, the self-proclaimed Muslim prophet, Mallam Muhammadu Marwa. Property worth millions of naira was destroyed. It took a combined operation by the army and the air force to quell the eleven-day revolt. The riots both alerted the country to the potentiality of new Islamic movements and marred the image of Muslims in Nigeria as united and peaceful.⁴⁴

The Federal government set up a commission of inquiry under Justice Aniagolu to investigate the revolt. The commission's report underscored the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism among Muslim youths. It pointed out that the Muslim Students Society in the north did not recognize the Nigerian Constitution nor the existence of the federal government, and was committed to the attainment of an Islamic state through an

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Thisweek*, Lagos, March 14, 1988, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Gilliland, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

Iranian type revolution.⁴⁵

In October 1982, further Maitatsine revolts occurred in Bulunkutu, Maiduguri and Kano. But for the Kano revolt when some Muslim fundamentalists set fire to a church in Fegge, the Maitatsine would not have directly affected Christians.⁴⁶ The federal government sent an emissary to CAN in Kano with a gift of 75,000 naira. The official status of this gift is however unclear. 'Perhaps it was meant to buy Christians' silence, perhaps it was part of compensation, perhaps it was Shagari's way of muddling through.'⁴⁷

The Maitatsines caused two further revolts in Jimeta-Yola, Gongola State, in 1984 and in Gombe, Bauchi State in 1985. The Jimeta-Yola riots were reported to have claimed 1,000 lives and property worth five million naira.⁴⁸ The Gongola State government estimated that it would cost over 61 million naira to reconstruct and fully rehabilitate the town. A total of 789 families made up of about 6,000 people were registered as displaced victims for relief materials.

Various explanations have been given for the Maitatsine revolts. The Aniagolu Commission that investigated the riots blamed it on the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism and fanaticism among youth. Doi argued that its adherents were foreigners sponsored by forces hostile to Islam and its progress in Nigeria.⁴⁹ Peter Clarke traced the roots of the movement to nineteenth century Islamic millenarianism

⁴⁵ Report of the Aniagolu Commission cited in Olupona, "Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 23.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Ekoko and Amadi, "Religion and Stability in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 122.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

⁴⁹ Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 293-302.

and Mahdism in the area, relating the message and figure of Maitatsine to theories of revolution and socio-economic deprivation.⁵⁰ Jacob Olupona similarly claims that it was a purely Muslim Millenarian movement that was protesting against religious and social oppression in contemporary Nigerian society.⁵¹ Paul Lubeck, while acknowledging its millenarian tradition contends that the movement revealed a clear class antagonism within its ideology.⁵² Irrespective of which view is correct, Maitatsine may be seen as an expression of popular disillusionment with elite-led secular nationalism.

THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ISSUE

In January 1986 the Babangida regime surreptitiously made Nigeria a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a body which promotes international Islamic solidarity. Christians were outraged. To them, it was a dangerous development, a covert imposition of a state religion and the abandonment of the secular status of the state. Muslims responded that it had nothing to do with Islam as a state religion and pointed to secular states such as Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau which are members of the organization. They claimed that the action was an economic one, to obtain desperately needed funds from the Islamic Development Bank, for which membership of the OIC is a requirement.⁵³ Nigeria had just before then

⁵⁰ Peter Clarke, "The Maitatsine Movement in Northern Nigeria in Historical and Current Perspective", in Rosalind I.J. Hackett, *New Religious Movements in Nigeria*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987, pp. 93-116.

⁵¹ Olupona, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁵² Paul Lubeck, "Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained", *Africa, Journal of the International African Institute*, 55 (4), 1985, pp. 369-389.

⁵³ *Newswatch*, October 8, 1990, p. 42.

rejected the IMF terms for a loan. Christians were unimpressed by the economic explanation.

President Babangida used the opportunity of his meeting with Catholic Bishops to comment on the Christian argument against OIC membership. He denied that the constitutional clause on religion entails the separation of state and religion. According to him such interpretation:

unnecessarily placed the State in a position of either neglecting religion outright as a factor in our national life or treating it with benign neglect. This would be quite inconsistent with the central role religion plays in the lives of our people. ... the normative role of religion in the attitude and conduct of our people cannot simply be ignored. We have therefore decided not to so ignore religion as a potent weapon of social mobilization.⁵⁴

He contended that religion should be given the opportunity to assist mobilization not only in the educational sphere but in all spheres of development:

Accordingly, we shall not neglect any opportunity to serve our national interest in any reasonable international forum. The same policy of propagating our national interest has been pursued by many nations outside the African continent with very positive results. To this end, the

⁵⁴ Major General Ibrahim B. Babangida, "Positive Encouragement to Every Religion", *Collected Speeches of the President*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, p. 252.

Nigerian flag will be raised in every international forum to which we have sufficient reason to belong or to attend.⁵⁵

The President's defiant attitude made Christians more nervous. The Anglican Bishop of Kwara, Herbert Haruna, warned the government to beware of a religious war while appealing to Christians in the armed forces to defend their faith.⁵⁶

The issue effectively divided the country into Christians and Muslims. Government and media institutions were polarized, and Government secrets were routinely leaked to religious leaders. Public servants at the external affairs ministry believed that it was 'their moral duty to do so'.⁵⁷ Each group accused the other of domination and vowed to defend their position with their lives. Many died in the ensuing protests, especially in Kano, Kaduna, Kwara and Oyo States. Embarrassed, Babangida set up a committee with an equal number of Christians and Muslims to examine the 'implications of Nigeria's full membership of the OIC'. The panel was predictably divided. It eventually submitted its report (some say two conflicting reports). The details have never been made public.

The covert manner in which the country became a member of the OIC was partially responsible for the conflict over the issue. Babangida's second-in-command, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, an Igbo, denied any knowledge about the issue. He claimed that it was never discussed by the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). The information minister, Tony Ukpo, confirmed that the matter was not officially discussed.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

⁵⁶ *Newswatch*, February 24, 1986, p 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

Besides, the decision to join broke an already established pattern. Nigeria had maintained an observer status in the organization for 17 years. When the organization was established in 1971 the government had made it clear that it had no intention of becoming a full member. Successive heads of state steered clear of the issue and played safe but General Buhari decided to tackle the issue. He arranged for Nigeria to become a full-fledged member, but before he could execute his plans he was overthrown. Non-Muslims felt that President Babangida took the decision in an attempt to appease the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy unhappy with the overthrow of the Buhari regime which had been seen as representing their interests.⁵⁸ They therefore felt that it was a deliberate slap in the face.⁵⁹

Nigeria is alleged to have withdrawn its membership of the OIC. However, the harm cannot so readily be undone. The issue effectively divided Nigerians 'into Christian Nigerians and Muslim Nigerians'.⁶⁰ No official announcement has been made confirming the withdrawal of membership, presumably to prevent further violence. The speculation is that the government consulted the ministry of justice as to the legality of its action and was advised that it was unconstitutional since the decision to join was not approved by the AFRC. What chance has secular nationalism when its holy book, the constitution, fails to inspire reverence from its high priest, the president?

⁵⁸ *Financial Times*, London, Monday, March 19, 1990, p. XIV.

⁵⁹ Adegbesan, "Pragmatic Involvement in Religious Matters", *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁶⁰ Ekoko and Amadi, *op. cit.*, 130.

THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS (NACRA)

A National Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (NACRA) was established in June 1986 as a result of the OIC conflict. Its main objective is to promote national unity and to maintain peace among all faiths. To this effect it is expected to regulate religious activities and to promote dialogue, consultation, understanding and social harmony amongst religious groups. It is to resolve issues which tend to cause suspicion, mistrust and antagonism among religious groups, and identify programmes and projects that will promote religious harmony and national integration as well as enhancing social and moral values.

It took over a year from its establishment for NACRA to be inaugurated. Christians refused to participate. Because of the evident political power of Islam, Christians feared that they would be the losers in a government-controlled council. In their view, it would be equivalent to a ministry of religion such as that which normally exists in countries that have an official religion with the purpose of promoting one religion at the expense of others.⁶¹

While these arguments were going on, the first major violent conflict between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kaduna State. The conflict began as a misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims at the College of Education, Kafanchan, and subsequently spread to other parts of the state. As happened after the massacres of May and September 1966, many residents of the core area of the uprising lost confidence in the ability of government to protect them and left 'foreign territory' for their 'homelands'.⁶²

⁶¹ Onaiyekan, "Secularism and the Nigerian State", op. cit. p. 11.

⁶² Ibrahim, "The Politics of Religion in Nigeria", op. cit., p. 65

It is not by accident that the confrontation between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kaduna State. The south of the state is predominantly Christian while the north comprising the Zaria emirate is Muslim. The indigenous ethnic groups within the Christian areas, generally referred to as Southern Zaria people, have historically resented the Hausa/Fulani settlers because of their traditional control of political power in the area. Kafanchan itself is a 'southern Zaria' town, predominantly Christian with settler Muslim Hausa/Fulani communities. The conflict thus had both ethnic and religious connotations.

President Babangida, in a nation-wide broadcast, described the unrest as the 'civilian equivalent of an attempted coup d'etat' against the government and the Nigerian nation'.⁶³ He saw the riots as part of the intrigue and competition for power between the elites. He proscribed all religious associations in institutions of higher learning for one year and set up a tribunal to deal with the criminal aspects of the crisis. In response to federal government order, the Kaduna State government set up a committee headed by the state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Mrs H. N. Donli, to probe the social aspects of the riots.

The riots convinced Christian leaders to participate in the proposed advisory council on religion. The government on June 29 1987 inaugurated the council, selecting equal numbers of Muslims and Christians. The decree establishing the council was amended to accommodate the objections of Christians.

A council comprising equal number of Christians and Muslims is unlikely to achieve much. What government has effectively done is to set the two groups against each other. For example, members could not agree on a chairman. They decided for

⁶³ Radio Broadcast by President Babangida on March 16, 1987.

two chairmen, one from each faith and with equal powers, in order to remove the fear of domination. Traditional religionists were not invited to the council, a measure which might have mitigated the extreme positions of the two camps and enhanced cultural nationalism.

Official policy towards traditional religion is ambivalent. Through the promotion of 'traditional culture', indigenous religious beliefs were accorded rights in law, administrative policy, medicine, psychiatry and pharmacology.⁶⁴ Marriages and contractual obligations sealed customarily were legitimated. The government has set up two different panels to study traditional healing which is tied to traditional religion. Practitioners of indigenous religion are now recognized as having a religion. Whereas indigenous religious forms were previously referred to as paganism and animism, they are now referred to as traditional religion. The minister of internal affairs, Col. Shagaya, pointedly told the journalist who referred to traditional religious rituals as paganism that 'there is nothing like paganism, rather they are called Traditional Religion because they also recognize the existence of God and therefore have a religion.'⁶⁵ In official forms, traditional religion now respectably appears where it was once not an acceptable alternative to Christianity and Islam. For example, in the 1973 census all Nigerians were required to identify themselves as *either* Muslim *or* Christian and thus, the government was already inadvertently promoting a cleavage between Christianity and Islam.⁶⁶ Traditional African religion is now taught in schools as part of religious knowledge. Yet, it has not been accorded any significant role in nation-

⁶⁴ Ogbu U. Kalu, "Religions in Nigeria: an Overview", in J.A. Atanda et al. (eds.), *Nigeria Since Independence: the First 25 Years, Volume IX, Religion*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁶⁵ *Thisweek*, Lagos, March 14, 1988, p. 26.

⁶⁶ Gilliland, op. cit., p. 171.

building.

At the inauguration of the council, the Chief of General Staff and second-in-command to president Babangida, Vice-Admiral Aikhomu, warned the members not to forget that there are other religions in Nigeria besides Islam and Christianity. The warning was bound to be futile. Members can only represent their respective religions. The Catholic Bishop of Ilorin, a member of the council, remarked that they would have regarded the warning as mischievous but 'for the dignity of its source'.⁶⁷ By providing only for Christians and Muslims in the Council the government is effectively indicating that traditional religion, unlike Islam and Christianity, has no place in nation-building, as well as inadvertently reinforcing the existing cleavage between the two organized religious blocs.

POPULAR REACTIONS

The contravention of the secular basis of the state by the series of Muslim-led governments from 1979 onwards raised Muslim expectations. It particularly encouraged fundamentalist political activism in the northern states where Islamization policies were vigorously pursued.⁶⁸ Islamic fundamentalism would not have posed a problem for nationalism but for its active campaign against secularism and for the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria. Christian radicalism has arisen to oppose such fundamentalist ideas. As a result of the activities of Islamic fundamentalist and Christian radical groups, institutions intended to foster nationalism now foster religious solidarity.

⁶⁷ John Onaiyekan, "Secularism and the Nigerian State", *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Olupona, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

In May 1986, the statue of Christ at the Protestant Chapel, University of Ibadan, was burnt down. The arsonists were assumed to be Muslim because they left Arabic inscriptions on the walls of the chapel. The antagonism between Christians and Muslims at the University started in 1985 at the opening of the new mosque when Muslims called for the removal of the cross erected with the chapel in 1953. The cross, they complained, was in the direction of the *Kibla* and as such distracted their attention during prayers.

The NYSC camps are divided between Christians and Muslims. Announcements of such meetings as the NYSC's Christian Corpers' Crusaders, Muslim Doctors' Association, Christian Lawyers Corpers' Fellowship and so on, are rife in NYSC news bulletins.⁶⁹ In 1987, students of Queen Amina College (formerly Queen of Apostles College) Kaduna, rioted in rejection of a new school uniform seen as Islamic. The old European-style uniform was seen by the Muslims as Christian. A similar riot took place at the Federal Government Girls College, Lagos.

Politicians prepared to battle for the Third Republic on religious lines as soon as President Babangida lifted the ban on party politics. Alhaji Gumi, an Islamic scholar, leader of the Izala fundamentalist group and a member of the NACRA, wanted the country to be divided if Christians did not accept a Muslim president.⁷⁰ Dr. Chief Arthur Nzeribe, an Igbo multi millionaire businessman, not only called for all Christians to unite and elect a Christian President but for the presidential candidates of the aspiring parties to be Christian Southerners.⁷¹ To forestall this, the President

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁷⁰ *Quality*, Lagos, October, 1987, p. 35.

⁷¹ Arthur Nzeribe, *Nigeria I Believe: a Manifesto for the 3rd Republic*, London, Kilimanjaro, 1988, p. 10.

dissolved all aspiring political associations and imposed two secular parties, the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention.

In January 1990 Christians protested over their under representation in the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). Babangida had reshuffled his cabinet replacing the existing Armed Forces service chiefs with three Muslims - Sunny Abacha (Army), Murtala Nyako (Navy), and Nuriemi Yusuf (Air force). Christian leaders interpreted the action as anti-Christian and called on Christians to protest. President Babangida cancelled his planned trip to the USA at the last minute to defuse the tension.

On April 22, 1990, a group of mainly Christian soldiers carried out what has been described by government as 'Nigeria's bloodiest coup'. According to the radio broadcast by Major Gideon Orkar, a leader of the coup, the predominantly Muslim states of Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Borno and Bauchi were to be expelled from Nigeria 'as a temporary shock measure'.

In March 1991 there was a religious riot in Katsina. In April 1991 seven churches were burnt down in religious riots in which more than 84 people died in Bauchi and over 200 in Tafawa Balewa town. Muslims claimed that Christians caused the riots when they rejected Muslim demands that an abattoir in Tafawa Balewa town should not be used for the slaughter of pigs and dogs. Christians claimed that the Muslims were encouraged to riot by the spiritual leader of the pro-Iranian Islamic Movement, Mallam Ibrahim El Zakzaky. He was believed to have ordered that Governor Madaki, a Christian, be killed for supporting blasphemy against the Prophet.⁷² That Zakzaky had the audacity to impose a death warrant on a military Governor, and that his followers are fanatical enough to carry it out, testifies to both

⁷² *West Africa*, London, 20-26 May, 1991, p. 796.

the increasing importance of religion in national life and the deep legitimacy crisis facing secular nationalism. The violent religious uprisings in the north in July 1992 and January 1993 provide further evidence that religion is an increasingly important factor in Nigeria's quest for nationhood.

CHAPTER NINE

ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA

Introduction

In this and subsequent chapters I shall examine the nature of ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria. The theoretical issues examined concern the relationship between ethnic identity and nationalism. Ethnicity has remained a major dynamic of national life in Nigeria despite government efforts to undermine it and bring about homogeneity. Nevertheless, the persistence of ethnic cleavages has not hindered the development of some sort of nationalist spirit. As Keith Panter-Brick has pointed out, it would be wrong to deny the place of nationalism in present day Nigeria.¹ 'It reached a quite high pitch under the brief leadership of General Murtala Mohammed, expressing itself most strongly in foreign policy and in widespread demands for a national ideology'.² In some instances the Nigerian political identity has been preferred to the ethnic identity as in the case of the Hausa inhabitants of Yardaji village.³ If, as traditional sociological wisdom indicates, ethnicity and nationalism are not only different but also mutually incompatible, how are they then harmonized in the individual Nigerian? Are they fundamentally incompatible and prone to conflict or can they, despite their different claims on the individual, co-exist in harmony?

I shall argue that ethnicity and nationalism complement each other in Nigeria.

¹ Keith Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil: the Political Transformation of Nigeria*, London, Frank Cass, 1978, p. 6.

² *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³ William F.S. Miles, "Self-Identity, Ethnic Identity and National Consciousness: an Example from Rural Hausaland", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 9, No. 4, October 1986, pp. 439-440.

Both are related variables playing a role in the formation of national societies. Anthony Smith's *Ethnic Origins of Nations* carries this message.⁴ While ethnicity may, in some circumstances and in some areas of life, obstruct the growth of national identity and cohesion, it may not do so in others. Ethnicity and nationalism are made more compatible by some of the intended and unintended effects which each set of processes has on the others.

The nature of ethnicity in contemporary Nigeria is dealt with in this chapter while nationalism is examined in Chapter Ten. The new religious setting for the interaction between ethnicity and nationalism is examined in Chapter Eleven.

NIGERIAN ETHNICITY: A NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

Ethnic identity is a real matter for socio-political calculation and engineering in Nigeria. People use their ethnic ties and cleavages rationally, in order to attain their individual aims, whether these are housing, employment, scholarship, school admission, or political office. An Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, or Tiv person who needs something from the state may be quite aware of the official procedure by which to apply for it, nevertheless, he is also aware that things are done unofficially with the strategic use of ethnic, friendship or pecuniary ties. The various levels of the society - political and economic, urban and rural, privileged and less privileged - are held together by ties of mutual self-interest. Such a system was described by Max Weber in relation to religion as a system of social and ethical conduct of association of

⁴ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986.

neighbours.⁵

In such a system, two principles are elemental. The first is the dualism of in-group and out-group morality and the second, apathy for out-group morality, and simple reciprocity for in-group morality.⁶ The principled obligation for in-group morality is to give fraternal support to members of the group in need. Hence, 'to the average Nigerian, a political leader is good only if he is able to patronize members of his family at the expense of other families, to promote the cause of his tribe at the expense of the nation, and, if need be, to defend the wrong of a brother at the expense of justice'.⁷

Reciprocity is the key notion in such a system. The procedure follows the basic principle of 'you do me, I do you', in Nigerian Pidgin, meaning 'as you do unto me I shall do unto you'. The underlying notion is, your want of today may be mine tomorrow. Although this principle is seldom rationalized, it plays its part in the sentiment of ethnic exchange. Not to respond is to break an unwritten ethical code of conduct. It is seen as the duty of those who respond to do so. This sort of ethnicity is criticized as opportunistic. However, the opportunism is sanctioned and accepted by the society as normal behaviour.⁸ Those for whom it works less well may decry it as nepotism, tribalism or corruption. The game is one in which opportunity knocks but once, and only fools refuse to make use of such opportunity. To miss the opportunity

⁵ H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 329.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 329.

⁷ William D. Graf and Aminu Tijjani (eds.), *Shehu Shagari: My Vision of Nigeria*, London, Frank Cass, 1981, p. xxi.

⁸ Peil Margaret, *Nigerian Politics: the People's View*, London, Cassell & Company, 1976, p. 67.

is to lose out. Such thinking informs the 'collective belief that public office is a basket of ripe fruits' and, 'every so often, new people must be allowed their presumed access to it'.⁹ The only sensible thing to do is to wait for one's turn. To a non-Nigerian this may sound cynical. But, as Dan Agbese has observed:

One good reason changes in government and in the ranks of political office-holders is so loudly hailed by Nigerians derives from this singular, even if erroneous, view. If there are no changes, the nation faces the danger of seeing only one group of persons "chop". And that is patently wrong. *Na only one man go chop?*¹⁰

Reciprocal ethnicity is beneficial. It acts as a social insurance for Nigerians in the absence of an official welfare system. It is a convenient means for the association of peoples and it provides mutual aid. For instance, it 'provides a buffer for new entrants into the cities and for those who find themselves in difficulty thereby ensuring mutual aid and leadership, providing common welfare, security and credit and offering a basis for links with the rural areas'.¹¹ Moreover, 'it recognizes a principle of differentiation whereby the opportunities of non-elites are maximized.'¹²

Most analyses of ethnicity in Nigeria tend to accuse elites of manipulating ethnic

⁹ Dan Agbese, "For the Nth Time", in *Newswatch*, Lagos, August 8, 1988, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹¹ Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension, 1978, p. 31.

¹² Lawrence Frank, "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism", in *JMAS*, 17, 3, 1979, p. 451.

identity for their own ends.¹³ The issue of why ordinary people submit to this manipulation is ultimately explained in terms of the common man's susceptibility to false consciousness. My observation is that both elites and ordinary people are engaged in a reciprocal process in which ethnic ties are used to bargain. Ethnicity, unlike wealth or education or machine guns, or status, is equally available to the common man.¹⁴ Low status people respond to ethnicity because it is the principle of differentiation that is least disadvantageous to them.¹⁵ Hence they too are engaged in the manipulation of ethnic identity.

Educated Nigerians often claim that they are not ethnocentric. Such claims were not supported by evidence. In a pilot study which I conducted on Nigerian students at Oxford University in the summer of 1985, direct attitudinal surveys proved ineffective. All respondents denied being ethnically conscious in their dealings with fellow Nigerians from other ethnic groups. They were very cagey in their responses, but this was not totally unexpected as ethnicity is castigated and derided, particularly among intellectuals. However, their ethnic biases became plain when I asked their opinion on contentious national issues like the federal character, the creation of more states and the minority problem. Their perceptions on these issues were determined by the extent to which they were advantaged or otherwise by their particular ethnic identities.

Everyone feels 'ethnic' at one time or the other, depending on circumstances

¹³ See for instance Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 176-177; Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Shaneson C.I. Limited, 1990, pp. 25, 74, 159; and Richard L. Sklar, "Ethnic Relations and Social Class", in A.O. Sanda, *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, Ibadan, Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, 1976, p. 151.

¹⁴ Lawrence Frank, "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism", op. cit., p. 451.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 452.

and the issues that are being addressed. As the head of state, General Buhari, pointed out 'all of us are guilty' of ethnic chauvinism.¹⁶ Rejection of one's ethnic identity does not obviate the identity. Others will call upon the individual who has repudiated his ethnic identity 'to perform', as Obi Okonkwo discovered to his detriment.¹⁷ In an individual's evaluation of any given situation, many factors will be critical, but some of them may be related to his ethnic identity.¹⁸

Ethnic categorization is common. Nigerians seldom categorize others by their wealth or occupation.¹⁹ With the creation of states a new dimension has been added to ethnic categorization. People now identify themselves and others by their state of origin. Although state sentiments are referred to by some Nigerians as statism, there is really no major difference between such sentiments and ethnic sentiments because an individual's ethnic identity is recognizable from his state of origin. Ethnic categorization, thus, informs official government practice which requires Nigerians to identify their state of origin on official application forms. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the ex-Biafran leader, decried such a situation, observing that:

In Nigeria, the accident of birth is sacrosanct. So also the accident of geography, the accident of language, the accident of religion, the

¹⁶ Rosaline Odeh, *Muhammadu Buhari: Nigeria's Seventh Head of State*, Lagos, Federal Department of Information, May 1984, p. 35.

¹⁷ Obi Okonkwo is the tragic hero in *No Longer at Ease*, Chinua Achebe's sequel to his celebrated novel, *Things Fall Apart*. In the novel, Obi Okonkwo refuses to acknowledge his ethnic ties by shunning his tribal union in Lagos, the Umuofia Progressive Union, and it leads to his downfall.

¹⁸ Peil, *Nigerian Politics: the People's View*, op. cit. p. 69.

¹⁹ James O. Ogunlade, "Ethnic Identification and Preference of some School Children in Western Nigeria", in Sanda, O.A. (ed.) *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria*, p. 65.

accident of tribal marks and the accident of dress... Each of these is regarded in Nigeria as immutable. Each can decide and does decide to a large extent the subjects place in society. Yet we preach ad nauseam ad infinitum the gospel of unity. Who is deceiving who?²⁰

Competition for jobs and frustration at failure are seen in ethnic terms. For instance, campaigners for the release from detention of the ex-governor of Anambra State, Jim Nwobodo, claimed that Nwobodo was 'simply unfortunate to have been born in this part of the country', implying that if he were not Igbo he would have long been released.²¹ This tendency to interpret failure in ethnic terms has been exacerbated by federal character and the quota system.

Ethnic rivalries are useful in Nigeria. They are especially used to negotiate terms favourable to ethnic elites. For example, the rivalry between ethnic majorities and minorities enabled the emergence of minority political leaders championing their emancipation through the creation of states. With almost half the numbers of states presently in their control, the minority ethnic groups still complain vigorously of neglect. Majority/minority rivalry still remains a major national problem with yet new minorities and champions emerging. The convenience of majority/minority rivalry is graphically portrayed by Abdullahi Mahdi, the head of the History Department at ABU, Zaria, who has observed that once those who present themselves as champions of ethnic minority interests 'are heard and identified and are given pittance, they keep quiet'.²²

²⁰ Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I am Involved*, Spectrum Books, Ibadan, 1989, p. 23.

²¹ *Newswave*, Lagos, August, 1988, p. 34.

²² *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 8, 1990, p. 64.

Ethnic bargaining is therefore a predominant feature of Nigerian politics. The advantage of threat forces immediate settlement. Leaders bargain because they disagree and expect that further agreement is possible and will be profitable. A compromise arrived at by bargaining is necessary to a successful election alliance:

Because individuals in different groups may also share membership in another group, compromise by bargaining is stimulated. Because individuals in different groups share some common values, bargaining is possible. And because different issues activate different combinations of groups, compromise by bargaining is continuous.²³

Ethnic stereotypes are widespread. This tends to encourage people to use ethnicity to characterize those with whom they have no closer ties. For instance, the Igbos are stereotyped as the Jews of Nigeria, willing to sell their souls for money; the Hausas as stupid and mindless followers of their tradition and leaders; and the Yorubas as dirty and shifty people seeking to reap where they have not sown. The rampant effect of such stereotypes are believed to be the result of upbringing. Sanusi Abubakar decried the practice of encouraging children to perceive the Yorubas as a dirty, conniving, conspiratorial lot, or the Igbos as shifty, money-centred and potential robbers or the Hausa/Fulani as lazy, ignorant beggars and herdsmen, as inimical to nationalism.²⁴ A study of Yoruba school children concluded that the respondents

²³ Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics, Economics and Welfare*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963, p. 333.

²⁴ Sanusi Abubakar, "Ethnicism and Nationalism", *Hotline*, Kaduna, March, 1987, p. 24.

'were merely projecting the stereotype feelings of their parents' in not thinking well of the Igbos.²⁵

No single agency can be held responsible for transmitting stereotypes to children. The children in the survey cited above were more likely to have been influenced by the federal propaganda which at that time portrayed the Igbos as rebels 'and the ethnic group that plunged the federation into the recent civil war.'²⁶ Ethnic stereotypes are more likely to be disseminated through what Uchendu has called 'joking relationships' in a pan-ethnic framework.²⁷ Ethnic stereotypes are, then, not all pejorative.

Ethnic categorization is reinforced by links between urban and rural areas. Most urban dwellers are immigrants born and bred in the rural areas. Only a tiny minority of the present adult population is urban born. Urban residence is regarded as transient. Home means the ancestral village. Generally, migrants to the city maintain close links with those at home by frequent visits. Such links are further reinforced by the formation of ethnic associations in the cities and abroad.²⁸ As 'Lai Olurode has observed 'the Nigerian experience has always taught one to be loyal in whatever one engages in toward one's place of origin as one hopes to retire or be buried there as

²⁵ Ogunlade O. James, "Ethnic Identification and Preference of some School Children in Western Nigeria", *op. cit.*, pp. 61-67.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

²⁷ Victor C. Uchendu, "The Dilemma of Ethnicity and Polity Primacy in Black Africa", in George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuity and Change*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 272.

²⁸ My daughter belongs to one such association, the Umu Imo (the children of Imo) Society, here in London.

well'.²⁹ Only a fool would disregard issues affecting his home town or local government area where he may be confined in future.³⁰ To prove the point, Shagari and his vice president, Ekwueme, have been restricted by military order to their villages.

The standard sociological theory for modernization and ultimately nation-building, invariably looks to the city as the locus for the formation of national, supra-ethnic identity within the developing countries.³¹ In the process of social mobilization, the city becomes a sort of melting pot as kinship links become weaker, local languages and dialects give way to the dominant national language and local cultures and customs lose their sway. The Nigerian experience controverts this assumption.

Ethnic attachment is a more important element of personal identity in cities than in villages. In rural areas, ethnic identity is not an issue. People usually do not ask themselves if they feel more Nigerian or more ethnic in their ethnic homeland.³² It is in the cities that contact between members of the ethnic groups occurs. Native urban dwellers resent migrants and often exert pressures on city administration 'to protect their traditional, but illegal rights'.³³ Non-indigenous dwellers on the other hand feel alienated and reluctant to participate in the development of the city. This has hampered national integration. In Lagos, the 'sons of the soil' regularly harass 'the

²⁹ 'Lai Olurode, *A Political Economy of Nigeria's 1983 Elections*, Ikeja, Lagos, John West Publications, 1990, p. 160.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

³¹ See Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1966.

³² See William F.S. Miles, "Self-Identity, Ethnic Affinity and National Consciousness: an example from rural Hausaland", *op. cit.*, p. 439.

³³ I.A. Animashaun, "Urbanization and its Implications for Nigerian Development", in J.U. Obot (ed.), *Nigeria: the People and their Heritage*, Calabar, Wusen Press, 1987, p. 212.

strangers', particularly Igbo traders, for allegedly prospering at the expense of native Lagosians. The ethno-religious conflicts in the north stem from such tension. Most northern cities [in comparison to southern cities] have a disproportionate concentration of southerners who live in *sabon garis*, that is strangers' quarters. When these strangers become prosperous the local people feel threatened and are quick to *remind* the *strangers* that the land does not *belong* to them:

Whether in the university or in the cities, when non Northerners own big businesses or become church leaders or heads of departments they constitute a serious threat to the hegemony of the ruling class in the region unless they behave accordingly and these circumstances have been part of the conflicts in Northern Nigeria.³⁴

Moreover, rural urban migration has been due to the 'push' factors of intolerable rural poverty rather than the 'pull' of industrialization and employment exerted by the urban areas. Urban amenities are inadequate and at various degrees of inefficiency and decay. Mass urban unemployment and poverty prevails. This has been exacerbated by large-scale retrenchment of public sector workers by the military and economic depression since the 1980s. It is the net-work of social relations - village and ethnic associations, ethnic contacts, friends, co-workers, neighbours - that makes it possible for the disadvantaged to remain in the city even when conditions are bad. Ethnicity is thus an important means of survival in the city.

³⁴ Matthew Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, SOAS, 1990, p. 297

THE NATURE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN NIGERIA

Multiple ethnic identity is prevalent among Nigerians. An individual can claim three or more ethnic identities simultaneously. For instance, the Ukwani ethnic group has eight sub-groups within it - Ogume, Abbi, Umukwata, Amai, Umutu, etc.. Within these sub-groups, there are further sub-groups which also divide further into sub-groups. For example, the Ogume sub-category divides into seven groups - Ogbagu-Ogume, Ogbe-Ogume, Ogbole, Onitcha-Uno, Umuchime, Utue and Umu-Ebu. Within each of these, there are further divisions into ward or clan groups, then into kinship groups. An Ukwani man can then be an Ogume man, an Ogbagu-Ogume man and an Umu-Enalu man depending on the purpose of his social interaction. Onigu Otite stated that multiple ethnic identities may be acquired first by descent through the father in a patrilineal society such as the Hausa, Bini, Kanuri and Urhobo, or through the mother in a matrilineal/double descent society such as the Afikpo, the Fulani and the Yakurr, and secondly through matrification or patrification, using and exploiting complementary kinship rather than descent, for merely being the child of his or her parent in a unilineal descent system.³⁵ Similarly, William Miles observed that eight or nine separate attributes of self-identity might be elicited for each person among the Hausa group he studied.³⁶ The form of ethnic group identity prevalent in Nigeria therefore differs from the ideal-types expounded in anti-nation-building theory, that is the primordialist and the instrumentalist types.³⁷ The first stresses the affective components in identity formation. The second adopts a sociological stance and

³⁵ Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁶ William F.S. Miles, "Self-identity, Ethnic Affinity and National Consciousness", op. cit., p. 432.

³⁷ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 19.

concentrates on the way in which social circumstances influence degrees of ethnic attachment, mobilization and conflict. These ideal-types assume that individuals have only one privileged ethnic identity.

Perceptions of ethnic identities are very accommodating. In urban centres migrants may be identified as members of groups which they would not acknowledge at home. Thus an Onitsha migrant in Lagos will be identified with other Igbos, whom he would normally deny if he was at Onitsha. In the same manner, an Egba-Yoruba and an Ijebu-Yoruba are perceived as one even though the rivalry between the Egbas and Ijebus has been an historical one. People from the north are all perceived as Hausa in the south. Sub-groups within ethnic groups may have a history of internecine conflict like the Yoruba and Hausa groups. They may have dialects that differ so much that they are unintelligible to each other, as with some Igbo groups. Yet to the outside world the groups appear as monolithic interest groups.

Group boundaries are not rigid. Effective ties claimed under certain circumstances may be denied at other times. Two groups may unite for the purpose of co-operative action, like getting a new state service for their areas, or they may fight bitterly to have an amenity sited in their respective areas. For instance, the Sade and Fika communities in Bauchi State cooperate on religious matters but are divided on land matters. They have fought a series of bloody battles over a piece of farmland.³⁸ Similarly, the Ogbagu-Ogume and the Ogbe-Ogume communities have fought bitterly over the leadership of the Ogume group. Their rivalry is such that each has an *Orie*

³⁸ Sade and Fika are both border communities with Sade in Bauchi State and Fika in Borno State. It is common for sub-groups within ethnic groups to wage war on each other because of land.

Ogume or market day, instead of a common one for the entire *Ogume* community.³⁹

Despite their enmity there is a high rate of inter-marriage between the two groups. They co-operated to fight for a new highway through their territory, and for a secondary school for the entire *Ogume* community. Within the *Urhobo* group, intra-ethnic conflict resolves into pan-*Urhobo* unity vis-a-vis neighbouring *Bini* (*Edo*) or *Itsekiri* ethnic groups. The *Urhobo* and the *Itsekiri* groups have fought bitter battles but the two groups are inter-mixed by marriage.

Ethnic boundaries are therefore adjusted according to circumstances and the self interests of the groups. Such situations may be objectively or subjectively defined, externally or internally induced, and may be redefined by the affected individuals, sub-groups and groups at any given time. For instance, *Akintola's UPP* was as *Yoruba* as *Awolowo's Action Group* but the identity which the two men used in their competition for leadership was not the *Yoruba* identity but their particular sub-group identities. Such changing boundaries are conducive to ethnic rivalry; a rivalry that is convenient for all the players.

Ethnic identity is largely based on association rather than common origin. The *Ukwuani* communities, for instance, speak the same language and claim the same ethno-*Ukwuani* identity, but they do not claim the same ancestral or migrational origin. Within the *Ogume* sub-group, some sections migrated from *Nnewi* in the *Igbo* area to the east, whereas others came from *Benin*.⁴⁰ The seniority of the sub-groups is reckoned according to sequence of migration into their present territory. These

³⁹ Each *Ukwuani* sub-group has one day of the *Ukwuani* week (four days) as its own market day. Rotation of the market days facilitates social interaction.

⁴⁰ Interview with Chief *Ossai Ogene Oluka*, the Chief Priest of *Onyebuke* shrine, Chief *Odokwu Igwara*, the *Okwa (Okparauku)* of *Umu Enalu*, and Chief *Ojugbeli*, all of *Ogbagu-Ogume*, the oldest settlement of the *Ogume* people.

migrations mostly occurred about three hundred years ago. Among the Urhobo groups there is an awareness of a common language and collective traditions but each group manipulates its separate historical, political and cultural symbols as a means of asserting its exclusive identity.⁴¹ What then is the basis of the pan-Ukwani or pan-Urhobo identity? Why do such different communities claim the same ethnic identity?

According to the explanation by the Ogume elders interviewed, the one decisive factor in the formation of their Ukwani identity is association and socialization: 'years and years of living together and doing things together'.⁴² Alagoa in his study of 43 Ijaw groups concluded that the basis for the Ijaw identity of non-Ijaw speaking groups was usually historical.⁴³ In the sixteenth century, the Efiks (an Ibibio sub-group) were known to the Europeans as the people of Old Calabar, not as Efiks. Because of their long and continuous contact with European influences, they have tended to regard themselves as very different from the rest of the Ibibio group and strongly resent any identification with the Ibibio, although both speak basically the same language.⁴⁴ The Hausa groups are divided on religious lines, those who were conquered by the Fulanis and socialized to be Muslims and those who remained pagans, the Maguzuwa. Salamone's study of the Gungawa who adopted Hausa identity in Yauri suggests that religion and access to political power are important determinants in becoming

⁴¹ Onigu Otite, *Autonomy and Dependence: the Urhobo Kingdom of Okpe in Modern Nigeria*, London, North-western University Press, 1973, p. 12.

⁴² Interview with Chiefs Ojugbeli, Odokwu Igwara and Ossai Ogene Oluka at Ogbagu-Ogume.

⁴³ Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta: an Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1972, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Arthur G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes*, London, Frank Cass, 1906, p. 17-21.

Hausa.⁴⁵ The pan-Yoruba identity is a modern one largely based on association. John Peel has shown how the Ijesha group through a process of historical association became ethnically Yoruba during the course of this century.⁴⁶ Igbo communities such as Onitsha, Asaba, have only recently (due to the experience of the war) acknowledged their Igbo identity.

The major ethnic groups as ethnographic categories refer to groupings of peoples that share common traits and traditions but also exhibit great differences internally. The common bond of ethnicity built over the lines of division is the result of years and years of association - living together, trading together, and even fighting with or against each other. The apparent fragmentation of the Igbos was undermined by fundamental alliances in religious, cultural, political and economic spheres. Inter marriages, attendance at inter-clan festivals, blood-covenants between neighbouring political units, and the many communal market groups were effective instruments of cultural unity.⁴⁷ The alliances which existed between Bonny and other trading towns in the delta were 'covenants', which acted as treaties:

But they were more than treaties in that, being ratified or cemented with the human blood, individual members of contracting parties regarded one another as "blood brothers". The bond thus, created was not limited by time or space. Wherever Bonny and Brass men met they looked on

⁴⁵ Frank A. Salamone, "Becoming Hausa: Ethnic Identity Change and its Implications for the Study of Ethnic Pluralism and Stratification", in A.O. Sanda (ed.), *op. cit.*, passim.

⁴⁶ J.D.Y. Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians: the Incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom, 1890s-1970s*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, passim.

⁴⁷ Dike, *Trade and Politics in The Niger Delta 1830-1885*, London, OUP, 1956, p. 44.

one another as brothers, bound perpetually by the blood covenant linking their two countries.⁴⁸

The Nigerian model of ethnic groups involves then the awareness that processes of collaboration and competition lead groups to a new identity or one that is more broadly or narrowly defined. It challenges the standard sociological approach of treating ethnic groups as solidary groups in conflict, demonstrating that ethnic groups are not monolithic interest groups, and that it is possible for sub-groups from different ethnic groups to collaborate in pursuit of their common interests, while retaining a strong sense of their separate ethnic identities. Such inter-ethnic cooperation may be informal or formal. Informal cooperation may take the form of a limited, loose economic, political, or other interest, that does not extend to social and cultural relationships where ethnicity may remain primary. Formal cooperation would involve more institutionalized relationships like those that exist in consociational regimes where elites from different ethnic groups collaborate on a regular basis to preserve both ethnic separateness and inter-ethnic elite dominance. The analytical implications of the Nigerian model for nation-building and ethnicity are immense. This is because it is attentive to patterns of intersectional communication and collaboration between segments of separate ethnic groups, and between the state and particular sub-groups or groups. The relationship between the state and particular groups is very crucial as the state may be pursuing its nation-building to the advantage of certain groups within it. A major reason for the salience of ethnicity in modern and modernizing states is that it is often intimately connected with issues of dominance,

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

hierarchy and stratification.⁴⁹ The model especially calls attention to the fact that the achievement of broad class, national, or ethnic group consciousness, is *not* a normal, ordinary event that is universal and permanent.

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: A THEORY OF FEAR

Fear of domination is characteristic of the behaviour of ethnic groups in Nigeria. The majority ethnic groups fear being dominated by each other. The minority groups fear being dominated by the majority groups, especially those contiguous to them. As a result of such fears minority groups form political alliances with geographically distant majority groups against contiguous majority groups, a phenomenon which I refer to as geo-political ethnicity. Sub-groups and religious groups replicate these fears which increasingly become translated into resentment and discontent and subsequently protest and conflict. The salience of ethnicity for conflict in the country is, thus, conditioned by such fears.

Fear of domination stems from evaluations by members of the various groups of their relative position vis-a-vis the distribution of power and societal resources. Hence, it is fundamentally the fear of being marginalized or alienated in the share of the 'national cake' by other contending groups. A succinct and vivid exposition of this theory was presented by the Northern Nigerian delegation to the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference held in Lagos in September 1966:

We all have our fears of one another. Some fear that opportunities in

⁴⁹ A.L. Epstein, *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1978, p. 114.

their own areas are limited. ... Some fear the sheer weight of numbers of other parts which could be used to the detriment of their own interests. Some fear the sheer weight of skills and the aggressive drive of other groups which they feel has to be regulated, if they are not to be left as the economic, social and possibly political under-dogs in their own areas of origin. ... These fears may be real or imagined; they may be reasonable or petty. Whether they are genuine or not, they have to be taken account of because they influence to a considerable degree, the actions of the groups towards one another and, more important perhaps, the daily actions of the individuals from other groups.⁵⁰

A memorandum submitted by the Mid-Western delegation at the same conference reiterated the theory.⁵¹

Fear of domination is the result of three related factors: the Nigerian conception of power, the inequalities in the economic and political relations of the groups, and the threat which such inequalities pose to members of the groups. In Nigeria, and indeed most African states, political power is conceptualized as residing in the ethnic group from which the leadership comes. This is because political power is seen as personalized in the politician (rather than in the post) and, by extension, in his group. Individual appointments to positions of power, status and influence are seen as an honour to the groups to which the individuals belong. Such a conception of power

⁵⁰ Federal Government, Ad Hoc Conference on the Nigerian Constitution, Nigerian Crisis 1966, 11-Documents of the Conference, Northern Delegation, Lagos, Government Printer, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

supports the reciprocal system of ethnicity and explains why the fear of domination is such a potent factor in the ethnic behaviour of Nigerians. In a country like Nigeria where the state is not only seen as the procurer, keeper and distributor of resources, but also as the promoter of values, such fears become substantial. It is not unlikely that the state could be used by the group that dominates it, to promote its own group interests above those of other groups. The state thus becomes a threat in so far as it is not controlled by the group.

Fear of domination lies at the root of Nigeria's inability to conduct an acceptable census.⁵² Census is a major issue of conflict because numbers govern in Nigerian politics. They 'determine who occupies what position in the political pecking order'.⁵³ They determine what size of the national cake a group can have. Since independence, Nigeria has had three planned population censuses. The first, in 1962, was cancelled. The second, in 1963, was accepted even though it generated much acrimony and was a contributory factor to the destabilising political unrest in the Western Region in 1964. The third one, in 1973, was accompanied by much acrimony and was consequently invalidated. A census was conducted in 1991 but its figures have not yet been ratified owing to public criticism. Many communities, local governments and states dissatisfied with their share of the population are challenging the figures at the Census Tribunal. It was in order to avoid public disaffection that the director of the census decided not to include ethnicity in the census. The special irony is that census taking, which was originally resented by Nigerians because it was associated with taxation or draft into the army, came to be regarded by the same people as a means of getting a fair share

⁵² S.G. Ikoku, *Nigeria's Fourth Coup D'Etat*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1985, p. 111.

⁵³ *Newswatch*, Lagos, October 8, 1990, p. 33.

of the 'national cake'.⁵⁴

Calls for a confederacy or the rotation of political power among ethnic groups are the result of fear of domination. Arguing for a confederal system, Odumegwu-Ojukwu observed that it will make for less friction, no wars and less fear.⁵⁵ The Political Bureau recommended the rotation of political power as a measure to deal with fears of domination but government rejected the idea, observing that such a policy amounted 'to an acceptance of our inability to grow beyond ethnic or state loyalty'.⁵⁶ Such a position in no way eliminates the fear which brought about the issue of rotation.

The fear factor in Nigerian ethnicity is so pervasive. It is not just expressed as a group sentiment but also as an individual one. Individuals project their fears and suspicions on other groups and blame their difficulties on the machinations of these 'enemies'. Failure to get employment or a political office is invariably explained not in terms of an impartial assessment of the individual's capacity, but in terms of discrimination due to the differences in the ethnic background of the candidate and the selectors. Margaret Peil referred to this as 'ethnic scapegoating'.⁵⁷

National issues are rarely discussed and perceived objectively but according to who is dominating who. For instance, issues such as revenue allocation, creation of more states, a lingua franca, are perceived according to how advantageous or disadvantageous the possible outcomes would be to the group. As far as many people

⁵⁴ Ahmadu Kurfi, *The Nigerian General Election 1959 and 1979 and the Aftermath*, 1990, cited in *Ibidem*, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, *Because I am Involved*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1989, p. 25.

⁵⁶ *Newswatch*, Lagos, September 21, 1987, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Margaret Peil, *Nigerian Politics: the People's View*, op. cit., p. 74.

are concerned, the determining criteria on such issues are objective or subjective to the extent that it favours or disfavors their own group.

The publication of a slim volume (164 pages) on the late Chukwuma Nzeogwu, leader of Nigeria's first military coup, was followed by violent reaction from sections of the Hausa/Fulani group who saw the book as an insult. Waziri Tambawal argued that the book was written 'to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it and by extension to paint a lurid picture of Northern leaders generally in order to show the world that such people do not deserve to rule Nigeria or even to participate effectively in its governance'.⁵⁸ Consequently, several copies of the book were burnt in a bonfire by protesters, including university students. The fury that followed the book's publication was described as 'demonic'.⁵⁹ Other examples of how fear of domination drives away reason can be seen in recent religious conflicts in the country, for example, the admission of Nigeria into the OIC or the removal of Domkat Bali as minister of defence.⁶⁰ To the outside world, the controversy and the fury may seem irrational and perplexing, or even pessimistic, but in Nigeria, they are a normal form of behaviour stemming from fear of domination.

Such fear-induced evaluation of issues leads to frustration and ultimately to conflict. It was such a situation that led to the military overthrow of the First Republic and subsequently to the civil war. To the coup plotters, it was the only way to destroy the stranglehold of the traditional Hausa/Fulani elite on the Nigerian political system.

⁵⁸ Abdullahi Waziri Tambawal, "Obasanjo: Opportunism, Treason and Hypocrisy", in *Hotline*, Kaduna, March 15, 1987, p. 8.

⁵⁹ *Newswatch*, Lagos, March 9, 1987, p. 14.

⁶⁰ Refer to Chapter Eight. These conflicts cited should be seen as ethno-religious in the sense that Islam is associated with the Hausa/Fulani.

The Hausa/Fulani fear of being dominated by the Igbos led to the revenge coup of July 1966. Igbo fear of alienation due to the relentless and manifest sense of injustice and victimization caused by the pogrom of Igbo officers and civilians living in the north led to the unconstitutional means of secession to remedy the situation.

The main features of this psychological state are irrationality and insecurity. Why, for instance, should Hausa/Fulanis fear that the publication of the book, *Nzeogwu*, would undermine their position and value? In what way can this be? Why do they refer to Nzeogwu as a 'murderer' (the Sardauna of Sokoto, the group's spiritual and political leader, was killed in the coup he led) and uphold as 'heroes' the Northern soldiers that carried out the counter coup in which the Igbo President was killed? Ironically, the Hausa/Fulanis have been the 'inheritors' of the legacy of Nzeogwu's action, that is, military coups and as such, are partners in the murder of which they accuse Nzeogwu. Again, why should a routine cabinet reshuffle of the President threaten the security of the country? Peter Lloyd's study of ethnic tensions between the Urhobo and the indigenous Itsekiri groups in Warri town excellently portrays this irrational nature of ethnicity:

Why should they fear Urhobo superiority? Typical responses included "They might insult the Olu (the king)", "Hooligans might insult my father (a chief) in the street". A reign of terror against the Itsekiri was predicted. ... the Itsekiri feared that the Urhobo might abuse them, as they had once abused the Urhobo. ... There seemed .. to be little immediate likelihood that the Itsekiri would loose their ethnic identity, even though the Urhobo had a reputation for cultural assimilation (two Ibo clans, for

instance, having become Urhobo in recent decades). ... It is such fears which seem to produce mob violence - violence which expresses no specific or well articulated interests, at least of the mob.⁶¹

Such fears are conducive to manipulation by self-interested individuals because of their irrational nature. According to Lloyd, those who gained most in the tension between the Urhobo and Itsekiri 'were the Olu and his circle of chiefs'.⁶² They encouraged the ordinary Itsekiri people 'to believe that a diminution in status of the Olu and his chiefs would be a substantial threat to their own separate identity'.⁶³ Lloyd, like several other theorists, concluded that ethnicity is to be understood from the perspective of elite competition for power, in short that ethnic identity is manipulated by the elite in competition for power. What is manipulated is the collective group fear of domination not their ethnic identity.

The pervasive significance of fears and anxieties about domination among the Nigerian ethnic groups suggest that analysts ought to be more attentive to the salience, importance and intensity of such fears and anxieties. Psychological factors have been emphasized in the causation of ethnic conflict, but seldom have they been advanced or expressed as the fear of domination. Although Kirk Greene proposed the 'Angstkomplex theory' of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, this intuition was not sufficiently

⁶¹ P.C. Lloyd, "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town in the Mid-1950s", in Abner Cohen (ed.), *Urban Ethnicity*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1974, pp. 248 & 249.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 248.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 249.

developed.⁶⁴

The concept of fear is a useful tool for the analysis of ethnicity. Ethnic identity is a combination of factors of self-identification (phenomenology) and categorization of others. Within this process fear constitutes the fundamental factor. It is fear that determines the boundaries of the identity. The lines of division between ethnic groups are either caused by or themselves produce a social psychological system. In such a system the fear is the dominant and constant element defining evaluations about contacting groups and subsequently, boundaries of the groups. The extent to which action taken to deal with the fear, reduces or heightens the frustration generated by such fear, suggests what forces of ethnicity - centripetal or centrifugal forces - are unleashed. Hence, the extent to which actors use their ethnic identities in Nigeria to categorize themselves and others for the purpose of interaction is determined by social psychological factors in which fear is central. To resolve the condition that generated such fear - whether genuine or imagined - involves processes of group collaboration or competition. This leads to a new perception concerning one's own identity or to a redefined identity. For example, an Onitsha man in Lagos which is Yoruba country, typically expands his identity to an all inclusive Igbo identity. This is rationally a way of dealing with fear of domination and alienation. His chances of participating in the national struggle for survival is enhanced if he collaborates with other Igbo groups. Fear, thus, explains why ethnic boundaries are flexible.

Finally, the theory of fear stresses the historicity of ethnic identity and groups and explains the socialized nature of ethnic identities. In doing this it takes cognizance

⁶⁴ A.H.M. Kirk-Green, "Genesis of the Nigerian Civil War and the Theory of Fear, *Research Report No. 27*, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1975, passim.

of interactive variables as well as symbolic ethnic interests and values, demonstrating that group cohesion is somehow instrumental. In other words, that cohesion is both a function of emotions and of institutional factors. For instance, group integration decreases during a crisis when there is no available solution and increases if a likely cooperative solution is present.⁶⁵ Thus, the consciousness of being different in relation to the wider society is of fundamental strategic importance to the consciousness of belonging. It thus synthesizes the instrumentalist and the primordialist perspectives on ethnicity, reducing the need to choose between the two polar models, a tendency which has damaged the proper understanding of the phenomenon.

Early studies of ethnicity in Nigeria approached ethnic conflict from the perspective of cultural pluralism.⁶⁶ These studies generally assumed that such conflicts were the result of the cultural differences between the groups and that ethnicity was the most destabilising factor in Nigerian politics. They believed that direct and continuous contact between the groups would decrease the differences among them. Conflict resolution was thus possible only if the groups could be brought into contact with each other.⁶⁷

More recent studies suggest that there is no automatic relationship between

⁶⁵ Hamblin, "Group Integration during a Crisis", in *Human Relations*, 9, 1958, pp. 67-76, cited in John M.G. van der Dennen, "Ethnocentrism and In-group/Out-Group Differentiation: a review and Interpretation of the Literature", in Vernon Reynolds et al. (eds.), *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 35.

⁶⁶ See for instance James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background To Nationalism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, p. 64; Victor A. Olorunsola, *The Politics of Cultural Subnationalism in Africa*, Garden City, Anchor, 1972; and also Robert Levine, *Dreams and Deeds*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Olorunsola, op. cit., p. 23.

value differences and ethnic group differences. Such studies generally claim that ethnicity is the result of the creation of new socio-economic systems particularly evident in large towns and cities and that it manipulates cultural symbols as groups compete for power in these new institutions. For example, Abner Cohen's penetrating study of the Hausa in a Yoruba town, Ibadan, concluded that the intensification of ethnic group affiliation among the Yoruba and the Hausa in Ibadan was the result of their relationship to the kola trade rather than their different cultural orientations.⁶⁸ Symbolic cultural markers were used in the competition but it was the presence of the competition that reinforced their identity. Such studies imply that ethnicity would not be salient if differences in income, occupation, political power, opportunities and general living standards were reduced or eradicated. Such analyses reflect and reinforce a more generalized theory of group relations that maintains that competition for societal resources is at the heart of ethnicity. Thus, for these analysts, ethnicity in Nigeria can best be explained as an economic or, more generally, as a material impulse. These notions of ethnicity in Nigeria beg several questions. For instance, why do ethnic affiliations elicit more passionate response and loyalty than trade union allegiances, to what extent is ethnicity dependent on social deprivation or privilege, and to what extent do ethnic groups and social classes overlap?

In Nigeria, there is no correlation between ethnicity and social deprivation, privilege or classes. The issue of which language should be chosen as the national language emphasizes the point that ethnicity in Nigeria is not solely about the distribution of resources. Many Nigerians already speak one or two of the major

⁶⁸ Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 132-133.

languages and the knowledge of a language other than their own have usually helped them materially. The same people who have benefitted because of their knowledge of another language oppose the use of that acquired language as the official language because it is not their mother tongue. For example many Igbos who work and live in Lagos have learnt to speak the Yoruba language but they will never support the choice of Yoruba as a national language because it is not their mother tongue. There is now a real concern among Igbos living in Lagos about their young children speaking Yoruba as a first language. Some parents I spoke with told me that they were set to stop it happening to their children. The sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic matters in Nigeria indicate that ethnicity cannot be explained by mere rational and objective calculations of material interests and symbolic differences between groups. The presence of pathological fears and anxieties about present and future circumstances shows that a more fundamental factor than mere material interest is at stake. These fears and anxieties are more disruptive than the existence of the actual group lines of cleavage. The problem of multi-ethnic societies stem from the uncertain nature of such fears and anxieties rather than from systemic cultural and institutional differences among the groups. To eradicate these fears and anxieties is to check ethnic and related conflicts.

CHAPTER TEN

NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA

Introduction

In this chapter I shall examine the nature of nationalism in Nigeria. I shall argue that ethnicity has contributed to national unity in Nigeria and that Nigerian nationalism exists in two different senses: as a popular emotional force and as an elite ideology. Unfortunately for Nigeria, whilst nationalism as an elite ideology is very effective, it is very weak as a popular emotion with the former tending to undermine the appeal and strength of the latter. However, nationalism as an elite ideology to legitimate the control of state power and struggles for it, does not have the intrinsic power to promote a popular and homogenous nationalism in Nigeria. It can only exploit the sense of national identity which already exists for the benefit of dominant elites. Therefore despite the high public profile of its hyperbolic rhetoric, elite nationalism largely fails as a means to unite the putative nation. However, the structure of oppression associated with elite-led nationalism provides the opportunity for other elites to arise and challenge the social order. This produces a debilitating cycle of political and economic renewal which in turn mobilizes individuals and communities to a new awareness of their political and social identity as Nigerians. The Nigerian experience controverts the analytical perspective which locates nationalism in the period of transition to industrial society. It suggests that nationalism is best understood as an effect of the ongoing dialectic of tradition in which legitimization claims of a social

order are sustained and challenged.¹

I shall, firstly, examine the nature of the Nigerian identity and the role of the minority ethnic groups in keeping Nigeria united before going on to examine the two faces of Nigerian nationalism.

THE NATURE OF NIGERIAN IDENTITY

The Nigerian identity is multicultural. Nigerians have two compatible national identities: they are Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Tiv, Bini, etc. in terms of their cultural identity and Nigerian in terms of their political identity. The various groups all have their own poets, songs, novelists and distinctive styles of clothing, cuisine and humour. Nigerians have, however, accepted such cultural pluralism as an integral aspect of their identity. When they think of their national identity, they most commonly think of themselves first as Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and so forth. At the same time, there is rarely any doubt about their being Nigerian. This is so even though politicians, sometimes, in the heat of political controversy, demand that Nigeria be broken up or be reconstituted as a confederation of its various ethnic nationalities. However, when faced with the decision to do so - as demonstrated by the civil war - many more Nigerians opt to keep it together as one unit, thus indicating a desire for the Nigerian identity. The slogan 'To Keep Nigeria One Is A Task That Must Be Done' was a winner during the civil war and even the name of the head of state during the war, Yakubu Gowon, was turned into an acronym for "You Are Keeping Us Better United" and "Go On With One Nigeria".

¹ Jayant Lele, "The Two Faces of Nationalism: on the Revolutionary Potential of Tradition", in Jaques Dofny and Akinsola Akiwowo (eds.), *National and Ethnic Movements*, London, Sage Publications for the International Sociological Association, 1980, p. 207.

Ethnic and national political identities complement each other in Nigeria. The 'average Nigerian' (a popular term used to refer to a typical Nigerian) is used for multiple allegiances. These are important for negotiating opportunities for self improvement - 'survival' in Nigerian parlance. 'As we say in Nigeria, *A child of two tribes never dies in a tribal war.*'² Such allegiances provide social security to Nigerians in the absence of a formal welfare system. The informal network of patronage which ethnic identities provide help to bridge the gap between the elite and the masses. In that way, it enables national integration and adds to the legitimation of the state.³

Individuals do not regard their ethnic and political identities as incompatible. General Buhari observed, when he was head of state, that identifying with one's group did not stop an individual from being a good Nigerian.⁴ A survey of incoming and outgoing NYSC participants in 1976 showed that the majority thought that ethnic identity did not jeopardize their national identity.⁵ They were asked if they thought it was possible to be a good citizen and still have strong ethnic ties. 61 percent of the pre-NYSC said it was very possible, 12 percent somewhat possible, 22 percent only a little possible and 4 percent not possible. 66 percent of the post-NYSC thought it very possible, 31 percent somewhat possible, 1 percent a little possible and 2 percent

² Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, SOAS, 1990, p. 296.

³ J.S. Coleman, and C.G. Rosberg, *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964, p. 8ff.

⁴ Rosaline Odeh (ed.), *Muhammadu Buhari: Nigeria's Seventh Head of State*, Lagos, Federal Department of Information, 1984, p. 35.

⁵ The survey was carried out in 1976 by ABU students. See Otwin Marenin, 'National Service and National Consciousness in Nigeria', *JMAS*, 17, 4 (1979), pp. 646-647.

not possible. Asked if it was possible to achieve national unity and to maintain ethno-cultural distinctiveness, 63 percent of the pre-NYSC agreed that it was very possible, 28 percent somewhat possible and 8 percent not possible, while 42 of the post-NYSC were very positive, 42 percent somewhat positive and 16 percent negative. This affinity between ethnic and state identities may be sufficiently explained by the fact that a plurality of identities enhances the chances available to Nigerians in the pursuit of their individual self interests. Opportunities for self improvement are few. Hence, it is advantageous to maintain several identities which can be strategically employed for the purpose of negotiating these limited opportunities.

According to the survey referred to above, loyalty to Nigeria and personal ambition are on a par. The respondents were asked what importance they would attach to the teaching of the following: the essentials of their religion, respect for authority, the traditions of their people, loyalty to Nigeria, the ambition to get ahead in life. Of the pre-NYSC group, 13 percent were for religion, 18 percent authority, 13 percent for tradition, 28 percent for loyalty and 28 percent ambition. Of the post-NYSC group, 9 percent were for religion, 17 percent for authority, 15 percent for tradition, 29 percent for loyalty and 29 percent for ambition. In a conflict of national loyalty and personal ambition, personal ambition overrides.⁶

The overriding importance of personal ambition means that loyalty to the state is weak. Nevertheless, it testifies to a more fundamental problem which is that Nigerians do not sufficiently trust their state to cater for their needs. This is a serious indictment against nation-building. For the individual to internalize the symbols of the nation, the nation must impinge upon the actual experience of the individual. Not only

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 649.

must it directly touch the individual, but the experience of this contact must be such that it actually benefits the individual, in terms of psychological security, to make an identification with the nation.⁷ Nationalism is weak in Nigeria precisely because the state has persistently proved unresponsive to the felt needs of its citizens. 'Government virtually alienates the individual as it shoulders minimum responsibility'.⁸ 'The dominant ideology is that people must learn to be independent of government - it does not matter that only government controls the most profitable access to the society's resources'.⁹ According to Obaro Ikime Nigeria will continue to search for Nigerians so long as it fails to guarantee the genuine protection of the interests of *all* its peoples.¹⁰

ETHNIC MINORITIES AND NIGERIAN NATIONALISM

Nigerian nationalism has benefitted from ethnic differences. This factor has been overlooked largely because of the popular approach to ethnic relations in Nigeria which emphasizes the power conflict between the three majorities. This approach assumes falsely that the politics of Nigeria is the politics of three majorities of almost equal strength, and ignores the influence of the numerous minority groups who together make up over 50 percent of the Nigerian population and who have been the

⁷ William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*, Cambridge, CUP, 1990, p. 59.

⁸ 'Lai Olurode, *A Political Economy of Nigeria's 1983 Elections*, Lagos, John West Publications, 1990, p. 164.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

¹⁰ Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians*, pamphlet, presidential inaugural lecture at the 30th Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Ibadan, Impact Publishers, 1985, pp. 31-32.

strongest supporters of national unity.¹¹ It has been the minorities that have determined by their self sacrifice, whether in the conference room or on the battlefield, that Nigeria would survive as a country.¹² For instance, in 1966-67 when Nigeria was on the verge of total disintegration it was the minorities from the Mid-West, the Middle Belt, Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers that championed the cause of one united Nigeria while the three majority groups argued for some form of confederacy or outright secession.¹³ Minority leaders 'saw the minority role, not as a fruitless challenge to the majority peoples in destructive power politics but rather as a kind of cement of Nigerian unity'.¹⁴ The Mid-Western delegation at the 1966 Ad Hoc Conference in Lagos presented the minority view, arguing that to dissolve Nigeria into its constituent major ethnic regions would be most unwise:

A break would mean that people who have long shared a common government, a common destiny and a common nationalism would be launched into independent hostile neighbours constantly fearful of intervention from one another. Such fears, real or imaginary, would sooner or later develop into armed conflict which in the context of

¹¹ Some scholars like Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, 1978, p. 295, and Margaret Peil, *Nigerian Politics: the People's View*, London, Cassell, 1976, p. 72, have noted the influence of the minorities on Nigerian unity but they did not show how they have done this.

¹² Jonathan Zwingina, "National Minorities", *The African Guardian*, 3/9/87 p. 7, and Joe Garba, *Revolution in Nigeria*, p. 21, cited in Matthew Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, SOAS, 1990, p. 303.

¹³ The Bendel State (formerly Mid-West Region) is generally regarded as a microcosm of Nigeria due to its accommodation of numerous minorities. The middle belt region of the former Northern Region contains an estimated number of 150 minorities.

¹⁴ M. J. Dent, 'Senator J.S. Tarka', in Simon Shango (ed.), *Tributes to A Great Leader*, Enugu, Ejike Nwankwo Associates, 1982, p. 17.

current world politics, would only invite meddlesome intervention of the other nations. In the resulting fight for survival the sovereignty for which we dissected the nation would be lost. Our nation, which today commands respect and dignity in the community of nations, would degenerate into relatively petty states. Having proved incapable of containing their domestic problems, the dissociating states could possibly have no respected voice in the world's councils.¹⁵

During the civil war, it was the minorities who fought to keep Nigeria one. Majority of the soldiers who fought on the Nigerian side were drawn from the middle belt minorities.¹⁶ The Eastern Region's minorities for their part sabotaged the war efforts of the Biafran army. Nigerians of Mid-West origin were extremely hostile to the Biafran invasion of the region. The non-Igbo elements facilitated the federal government recapture of the region from the secessionists. Their action was both a demonstration of anger against the secession and a profession of faith in Nigerian unity.¹⁷ Today, the minorities still remain the major factor in Nigeria's integration whether the north seeks regionalism as a means of retaining power or the south seeks an alliance on the basis of religious sentiments.¹⁸ In terms of *real politik*, therefore, the ethnic minorities are the majority that hold the balance in Nigerian nationalism.

¹⁵ Nigerian government, September, 1966, Ad Hoc Conference Papers, Government Printer, Enugu, pp. 32-37. See also p. IV for how the Middle Belt minorities exerted influence on the northern delegation to accept a strong central government rather than a loose confederation.

¹⁶ Dent, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Sam Egite Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria: a Study in the Development of the Nigerian State*, London, Macmillan, 1985, p. 132.

¹⁸ Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

They have been able to do this essentially because of the rivalry between the ethnic majorities. The principle of respect for ethnic difference obliges the major groups to consider not only each other but also their smaller neighbours. It is in the space between the major groups that minority cultures are able to prosper. If Nigeria was to be divided up between the major groups it is unlikely that such tolerance would be afforded the minorities, as the major group in each territory would probably attempt to enforce its cultural domination.

Minority ethnic groups' fears of domination by neighbouring majority groups have always propelled them to seek political alliances with majority groups outside their region. For instance, the Middle Belt minorities' fear Hausa/Fulani domination and have as a result sought alliances with majority groups in the south. Similarly, southern minorities have sought alliances with the northern majority group. Such a situation ensures that no one group can be absolutely dominant except through the coercion of the minorities in the same political unit as was the case in the 1960s. Indeed, no ruling political party in Nigeria has ever had an overall majority in the parliament. They have always had to seek an accord with a second political party in order to effect their rule. This means that political alliances are flexible and are frequently redefined according to changing circumstances. Such changing political groupings can be interpreted as a sign of a pluralistic 'democracy'. Although this sort of democracy does not guarantee an overarching spirit of nationalism as in the best democratic tradition of the west, it signifies that ethnic lines are not rigid and that the groups are not solidary, exclusive groups as they are popularly portrayed to be. It shows the dynamic process of inter-ethnic group relations which tells us more about links, cooperation, reciprocity and exchange, demonstrating potentials that exist for achieving national

unity in societies like Nigeria.

THE TWO FACES OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM

Nigerian nationalism has to be understood in terms of its dual nature, as legitimization of domination and as a reaction to such domination. In other words, nationalism in Nigeria is both a popular emotional force and an elite ideology. Nationalism as a popular emotional force is strong in relation to other countries and foreigners. This sense of nationalism is reflected in popular support for the state when it is threatened from outside criticism, commercial aggression, physical attack or when it is in competition with other nations. For instance, mass nationalism was stimulated when Cameroonian troops killed five Nigerian soldiers inside Nigerian territory in 1981. The intensity of nationalist feelings aroused by the incident was such that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, called on the government to return 'fire for fire'.¹⁹ Similar sentiments were demonstrated in 1983, when Chad claimed part of Nigerian territory. The condition of Nigerians living on the Nigeria-Cameroon border was again a major issue of public concern in 1990. Many Nigerians called on the state to wage war on Cameroon as 'the only solution to the atrocities on Nigerians'.²⁰

Imperialist interventions in Nigerian or African affairs excite popular nationalist feelings. For instance, there was national outrage in 1988 when it was revealed that Italy was dumping nuclear and toxic wastes in Nigeria. Most Nigerians were united in condemning imperialism and its local agents. One commentator described the national

¹⁹ *Daily Times*, Lagos, June 1, 1981, and *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, June 1, 1981.

²⁰ See for instance *The Sunday Concord*, April 8, 1990, p. 9.

furore on the issue as a 'consciousness-raising experience'.²¹ Also, in 1987, when it was alleged that South Africa was building a military air base in Fernando Po, mass nationalism came to the fore in the form of popular demands for the annexation of the island. Such mass feelings are often engineered and used by Nigerian leaders to win public opinion. For instance, President Babangida helped to generate mass feelings against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to win popular support for the harsh economic measures he knew he had to impose on the country in 1986. He initiated a national debate on whether Nigeria should accept an IMF loan. His nationalist economic slogan proclaimed in posters all over the country was: 'IMF Economic Independence or Slavery?'. The irony was that the economic conditions imposed by Babangida were the same as the IMF conditionalities which were rejected as imperialist.

A major rallying point for popular nationalism is the Junior World soccer competition. The dominating role of the Nigerian under-17 team, the Eaglets, in this competition has been the source of great national pride for Nigerians. Since 1985 when the team won the World Cup 'Nigerians began to realise that if they could not make a computer or manufacture a "black bomb" but could roll a round object very well, they could still capture the imagination of the world.'²² The Eaglets are today a symbol of Nigerian nationalism. President Babangida while urging Nigerians to become patriotic, told them to be more 'like the Eaglets who are the wonder of Toronto and the world of young football' and 'to resolve to give to our nation continuing reason

²¹ Shehu Abubakar, "Exit Chemical Waste, Enter Nuclear Waste", in *Hotline*, Kaduna, August 22-September 4, 1988, p. 7.

²² *Newswatch*, Lagos, September 28, 1987, p. 4.

for pride and satisfaction; and to the world a reason for envy'.²³

The state has therefore benefitted from successful nation-building in relation to external environment. Such nationalism was summed up in the patriotic rhetoric of General Buhari: 'this generation of Nigerians, and indeed, future generations, have no other country than Nigeria. We shall remain here and salvage it together.'²⁴

Internally, nationalism as a popular force is sporadic and ineffective as a force for national unity. Such sense of nationalism is reflected in widespread disillusion and anger directed against government and 'the big men'. It has been expressed informally through mass participation in riots, demonstrations, strikes, violent protests, uprisings and 'jungle justice'. For instance, in 1989, during the junior World Cup football finals held in Saudi Arabia, the Nigerian Electric Power Authority (NEPA) cut off the power supply to FESTAC village, a suburb of Lagos, during a crucial televised quarter-final match between Nigeria and the Soviet Union. Angry residents marched to the area NEPA office, chased away the officials and vandalized the building and vital equipments, including a transformer, to press home their case for a stable supply of electricity in the area.²⁵ In December 1980, Kano, Nigeria's second largest city, was the scene of large scale riots by followers of the self-proclaimed Islamic prophet and preacher, Maitatsine. His followers consisted mainly of poor people protesting against what they perceived as the abuse of Islamic principles by the wealthy. Although many Nigerians were shocked by the endemic nature of such protests, the Maitatsine critique of the wealthy elites and the government is shared by most of Nigeria's urban

²³ Speech by President Babangida at the launching of the Social Mobilization Programme, July 25, 1987, Lagos, p. 8.

²⁴ Part of General Buhari's maiden speech reproduced in *Newswatch*, September 9, 1985, p. 26.

²⁵ *Sunday Concord*, Lagos, July 29, 1990, p. 5.

poor.²⁶ In 1989 the urban poor, including university students, school children, small traders and lower level state bureaucrats demonstrated against the privileged classes and the government's Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP), leaving a trail of blood and ashes behind them.²⁷ What all this amounts to is that Nigerians are becoming more conscious of their identity as Nigerians. They are now aware that they have a stake in government.

A less dramatic manifestation of this radical nationalism is the growth of political and non-political organizations seeking to promote a better Nigeria. Such non-political organizations include the Committee of Patriots (COP), the Nigerian Council for National Awareness, the Unity Movement, the National Association of Anti-Corruption Crusaders and the Pro-Democracy Movement. In 1987, the largest, COP, publicized its aims and objectives and invited all Nigerians to become members. The overwhelming response indicate that many Nigerians are concerned about the future of their country. Such concern has given rise to the genre of Nigerian literature referred to as social conscience literature. Such writings generally deal with corruption, demonstrating to the powerful that people know what they are doing. Their major aim is to define Nigeria to itself and to others. 'Literature and Nation-building' was the theme of the annual meeting of the Association of Nigerian Authors in 1991.

Nigerian nationalism has been more effective as an ideology used by the elite to legitimate the exercise of and the struggles for state power. Its history has been a history of power relations. It was the rallying cry of the Nigerian political elites against

²⁶ Paul M. Lubeck, "Islamic Protest under Semi-industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained'", *Africa*, Vol. 55, No. 4, 1985, p. 387.

²⁷ *Newswatch*, Lagos, June 12, 1989, p. 10.

the British colonial government. For the Nigerian nationalists the struggle for independence amounted to a struggle for succession to colonial power and privilege, that is the right to replace one elite with another.²⁸ In the First Republic nationalism was merely a means for a sectional group to control the federal government. Under the military the situation has remained unchanged. Nationalism is the ideology used to legitimate military coups and military exercise of power. When sections of the Nigerian army first seized power from the civilians in January 1966, they claimed that their action was motivated by 'the spirit of Nigerianism'.²⁹ Although the revenge coup of July 1966 proved that this image of the military as the defender of national values was false, the military has continued to use such nationalist ideology to legitimate its claims to power. Nigeria since independence has had eight coups, six of these attempts have been between 1970 and 1990. The coup plotters invariably claim that their aim is to preserve national values. The 'Why-We-Struck' speeches are typical:

After due consultations over these deplorable conditions, I and my colleagues in the armed forces have, in the discharge of our national role as promoters and protectors of our national interest, decided to effect a change in the leadership of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and form a federal military government.³⁰

²⁸ William D. Graf, *The Nigerian State*, London, James Currey, 1988, p. 18.

²⁹ Billy J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1973, p. 107. See also Alexander A. Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980, p. 19.

³⁰ Broadcast by Major General Sanni Abacha to explain why the army had overthrown the civilian government of Shagari, on December 31, 1983.

Elites seek state power ostensibly to promote development, that is the improvement of life chances of citizens. This idea of development emphasizes modernization and economic power. The Chairman of the National Republican Convention (NRC), Tom Ikimi, enunciated the elite idea of nationalism when he observed that it is the means 'to put the nation together, build the nation and create wealth for our people'.³¹ Nationalism, thus, is the use of state power to bind together and provide a broad Nigerian identity for those tempted by the benefits of modernization - status, security, honours and wealth - to abandon tradition.

In Nigeria the control of the state is the primary avenue to private accumulation. In other words, the possession of political power, or access to it, is the means to status, security, honours, benefits and wealth. Ruling elites use their position not only to enrich themselves but also to actively incapacitate their rivals. Hence, the line between power for developmental purposes and for elite profit-making may be difficult to distinguish. This relationship between class formation, state power and state structure both weakens the appeal and strength of nationalism as a popular force and makes nationalism a divisive rather than an integrative element in Nigeria. It does this in two related ways: by affiliating nationalism with ethnicity and by opposing popular democracy. The struggle for power needs substantial mass involvement and participation. The logic of political mobilization dictates that people be mobilized in terms of what matters to them. In an ethnically-divided and largely illiterate society like Nigeria ethnicity is the most readily available and efficient means for this purpose. Elites therefore seek to win the people's votes upon appeals to traditional features of the society, such as ethnic and religious identities (rather than on ideological issues).

³¹ Interview with Tom Ikimi reported in *African Concord*, Lagos, 13 August 1990, p. 27.

It is relevant to emphasize that Nigerian elites, in spite of their different ethnic origins, have no problem sharing political positions and official booty.³² In other words, they cooperate and form alliances to realize their political and economic self-interests in spite of their separate ethnic identities, demonstrating that politics in Nigeria is not simply an ethnic phenomenon. The dilemma of dominant and aspirant dominant elites is how to possess and secure power in a democratic state such as Nigeria that lacks social consensus legitimating the accumulation of capital. With 'the people' standing between them and the source of capital, that is state power, such elites can be expected to use all means available - fair and foul - to compete for such power.

In addition to appeals to ethnicity, the most effective way to gain power is to subvert democratic procedures. This is achieved through election rigging, thuggery and police brutality:

Rigging elections has for a long time been as Nigerian as pounded yam or millet.³³ All parties are tempted to do it, if they think they can get away with it. The electoral laws of 1979 and 1982 did their best to make the voting system as foolproof as any law can make it, but vigilant party activities still have the will to find loopholes, and where there is a will there is a way. It is probably only possible to rig elections effectively from a position of power.³⁴

³² Olurode, *A Political Economy of Nigeria's 1983 Elections*, op. cit., p. 165.

³³ These are staple Nigerian foods.

³⁴ Olurode, op. cit., p. 7.

Attempts to subvert democratic decision-making always precipitate political crises and provide military elites with the opportunity to make a bid for state power. Election rigging creates a feeling of frustration and helplessness among the populace as a government they voted out continues in power. The military comes to the rescue of the people and effect the change. The public welcomes the military intervention with the expectation that the security they crave is imminent. Past crimes against the people are cited as justifications both for the new regime and its reforms. The new military government attempts to legitimize itself as well as exorcise the ghost of the past government by making out that the period when its predecessor was in power were bad old days and that it represents a new order of national salvation.

This process is a normal and universal feature of all human societies. New groups arise to challenge the legitimation claims of an existing social order whenever conditions of misery destroy even the semblance of order and meaning in the daily lives of a population. As Karl Deutsch has observed, if a government proves persistently unresponsive to the felt needs of its population:

[Some] or many of its subjects will cease to identify themselves with it psychologically; it will be reduced to ruling by force where it can no longer rule by display, example, and persuasion; and if political alternatives to it appear, it will be replaced eventually by other political units, larger or smaller in extent, which at least promise to respond more effectively to the needs and expectations of their peoples.³⁵

³⁵ Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", in Jason L. Finkle and Richard W. Gable (eds.), *Political Development and Social Change*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1966, p. 216.

In legitimating itself, the new ruling group attempts to satisfy popular expectations by promoting some sort of development. However, the appeal of private accumulation from the state proves far too irresistible. The new rulers use their power for profit, duplicating the crimes that they came into power to correct. This arouses popular resentment and further provides opportunity for another section of the military to make a bid for power. The Nigerian political experience is consequently like a game of musical chairs, a debilitating cycle of political renewal and decay. The overall effect is political and economic chaos. Such a negative condition mainly destroys individuals not the structures that obstruct the growth of a popular homogenous nationalism.

Paradoxically, the structure of oppression which has accompanied elite-led nationalism is increasingly transforming the Nigerian society. Constant changes of government have given Nigerians a new understanding of their political and social identity. The abuse of power for profit by ruling elites has made ordinary people aware that 'their oppression stemmed from capital and not from [sic] ethnic groups'.³⁶ The cries of 'change, change' in every political rally during the Second Republic, although often interpreted by the government to mean change of individuals, marked the steady growth of this new understanding.³⁷ When the military overthrew the civilian government on the eve of 1984 the people rallied to the new regime with the expectation that the change they sought had come. 'Happy New Government' replaced the traditional new year greeting. Nduba Echezona has argued that the manner in which broad sections of the Nigerian peoples reacted to the new regime's attempts to

³⁶ Nduba Echezona, "Strategies for National Integration In Nigeria" in Stephen O. Olugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Political Futures for Nigeria*, Lagos, Nigerian Political Science Association, 1987, p. 184.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

deal with corrupt politicians is indicative that the future of utmost total integration of the peoples of Nigeria has arrived.³⁸ 'It was no more a question, as in the 1960s, of sympathizing with politicians in terms of ethnic consciousness or ethnic world view, but of seeing issues from a trans-Nigerian perspective.'³⁹

The poor performance of the military has further reinforced this awareness. Military coups are no longer popularly welcomed. Through the sustained failure of the economy and the increased instability caused by military coups and threats of them, Nigerians have understood that the military are no less self-interested than are their civilian compatriots. The August 1985 and April 1990 coups were accompanied by popular indifference. According to an opinion poll of the 1985 coup, many of the respondents indicated that they had resigned themselves to fate.⁴⁰ Margaret Salami, an Isole house-wife and roadside trader, described as expressing the popular view, claimed that she was 'not bothered by whoever grabs the mantel of leadership in Nigeria', her major concern being her kiosk which was her only means of livelihood.⁴¹ Such popular apathy to government testifies to the deep legitimacy crisis facing elite-led nationalism in Nigeria.

Nigerian nationalism as an ideology for domination largely fails as a means to unite the putative nation despite the high public profile of its hyperbolic rhetoric. It has made ordinary Nigerians victims rather than beneficiaries of nationalism and modernity and consequently created an identity crisis for individuals and communities who are

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

⁴⁰ *Newswatch*, Lagos, September 9, 1985, p. 25.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

increasingly turning to religion as a corrective for the disorder and meaninglessness in their lives.

The Nigerian experience controverts the analytical perspective which claims that nationalism is a phenomenon specific to modern industrialized societies. Nigeria cannot be described as an industrialized society, yet it would be wrong to say that it has no nationalism. Its nationalism reached quite a high pitch under the leadership of General Murtala Mohammed. To subscribe to the idea that nationalism is only feasible in industrialized societies is to deny Nigeria nationalism. Such a perspective misses the significance of social factors such as the structure of power in relation to the process of wealth accumulation and the contradictory relations of domination and resistance which accompanies such a process. Consequently it is ahistorical. Nationalism can best be understood as a product of the continuing dialectic of history in which legitimation claims of a social order are sustained and challenged. Thus nationalism has two faces, one as dominant ideology legitimizing appropriation, the other revolutionary, resisting domination under oppression in a period of uncertainty.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOLY NATIONALISM

Introduction

The credibility and secular ideology of the Nigerian state have come under increasing attack from Islamic fundamentalists. Young Muslims see the establishment of an Islamic state as the only alternative to the stressful changes of elite-led secular nationalism and modernity. Christian radicalism has arisen in opposition to such militant Islam. The competition between the two religious systems is redrawing cultural boundaries and agitating nationalism in Nigeria. Islam which has historically united sections of the society is increasingly losing its capacity to do so. It has become a divisive factor, particularly in northern Nigeria. In contrast, Christianity, not known for its unity, is increasingly becoming a unifying factor for large sections of the society. It is the new identity for previously subject ethnic communities of the middle belt now revolting against their former Muslim Hausa\Fulani rulers. The final outcome of the contest no doubt has far reaching implications for the future of Nigeria as a nation.

In this chapter I shall examine the increasing importance of Christian and Muslim identities in national life. I shall argue that the current political revitalization of religion in Nigeria is both an expression of the deep legitimacy crisis confronting elite-led secular nationalism and a means of resolving such a crisis. It is therefore an increasingly important factor in legitimating Nigerian nationhood, because it enables individuals to locate themselves within the political, social and economic environment of the emergent Nigerian nation. Recourse to religion as a corrective to national identity crisis is not unique to Nigeria. In Turkey and Malaysia, for example, alienated

victims of maldevelopment turned to Islam to express their new identity crises.¹

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section describes the religious changes taking place in the country while the second seeks to explain such changes.

RELIGION AND CHANGE IN NIGERIA

The growing sense of political identity in the country has become both national and religious. Christian and Muslim identities are now competing with the Nigerian political identity in importance. A journalist vividly portrayed the situation when he observed that Nigeria meant 'far less to the ordinary Nigerian than his Allah or God.'² This emergent 'holy nationalism' has been conditioned by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism since the 1970s and, in response, Christian radicalism.

Islamic fundamentalism is distinct from the Islamization campaigns in the 1960s promoted by the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, which was aimed at unifying the Northern Region under the NPC. Current Islamization campaign is aimed at purifying Islam from syncretised, un-Islamic practices. This involves purging Muslim communities of traditional African religious practices and condemning the mystical practices and beliefs of Sufi brotherhoods (*Yan Darikas*), mainly the *Tijaniyya* and the *Quadriyya*, who together make up the bulk of Nigerian Muslims. The movement is intolerant of non-Muslims and its supporters are mainly youths. It includes groups such as the Maitatsine, *Izala*, Muslim Students' Society (MSS) and the pro-Iranian Islamic

¹ Ozay Mehmet, *Islamic Identity and Development: Studies of the Islamic Periphery*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 3.

² *New Nigerian*, 6/12/77, cited in Matthew Hassan Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation: a Case Study of the Religious Riots in Kaduna State", paper presented at the International Conference on Religion and Protest in Africa, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA, 25-27th April 1991, p. 23.

movement.

The Izala, led by Islamic scholar, Sheik Abubakar Gumi, is a powerful and theologically orthodox group. It considers the Maitatsine, *Tijaniyya*, *Quadriyya* and *Ahmadiyya* as non-Muslims. There have been numerous clashes between the Darika and the Izala since Sheik Gumi denounced Ahmadiyya Muslims as un-Islamic. Gumi has always been close to power in Nigeria and has maintained very close relations with the Saudi authorities since the late 1950s, when he was the Nigerian ambassador in that country and Sir Bello's Arabic translator on pilgrimages to Mecca. He has funding from Saudi Arabia and from business. The group therefore has buses and public address systems and is able to organize regular campaigns in northern towns and villages. Its cassette recordings of Gumi's sermons are sold throughout the north. The group has a significant female membership. It has over a thousand married women registered as members at ABU, Zaria, where the group's activities have become part of the programme of the Centre for Adult Education.³

The MSS was founded in 1954 as a mainly Yoruba organization. By the 1970s, it had been transformed into a national organization with over 400 branches around the country. Members of the group are from universities and higher institutions of learning. The society organizes prayers, fellowship and evangelization campaigns on university campuses. It campaigns against the secularity of the state and the sale and consumption of alcohol. The radicalization of the group was encouraged by the debates over the Sharia in 1977/78 and the 'Islamic revolution' of 1979 in Iran which raised the prospect of a holy Nigerian nation from the realms of theory to practice. The

³ Jibrin Ibrahim, "The Politics of Religion in Nigeria: the Parameters of the 1987 Crisis in Kaduna State", *ROAPE*, 45-46 (1989), p. 72.

Iranian government sponsored members of the MSS to travel in Iran for indoctrination and provided literature for propaganda against the Nigerian secular state.

The pro-Iranian Islamic movement is an off-shoot of the MSS. Its leaders, Mallam Ibrahim El Zakzaky and Yakubu Yahaya, belonged to the militant wing of the MSS in their university days. The group comprises both populist and elitist elements and is referred to in the press as Shiite but members reject the tag, declaring that 'there is nothing like the Shiite in Nigeria, but only Islam'.⁴ It is committed to the total Islamization of Nigeria. For the group anything short of the holistic approach of Ayatollah Iran is unacceptable.

The Maitatsine group comprises mainly Koranic students, (*almajirai*, or *gardawa*), and unemployed migrants to cities. The group separates itself from the orthodox community both socially and spatially.⁵ Muslim scholars in Nigeria deny that the Maitatsine is an Islamic group but the members believe themselves to be Muslims. What is significant about the Maitatsine is that their teaching and doctrines condemn the widespread corruption of existing secular and religious elites especially the orgy of western consumption enjoyed by the privileged classes during the oil boom.⁶ The group perceives the Nigerian police 'as the contemporary expression of the devil'.⁷

In general, Muslim fundamentalists are opposed to secular nationalism. They perceive the secular status of the state as a western idea and consequently unacceptable to them. They believe that secularity is responsible for the country's

⁴ *West Africa*, London, 20-26 May 1991, p. 796.

⁵ Paul Lubeck, "The 'Yan Tatsine Explained", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 1985, Vol. 55, No. 4, p. 370.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 370.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 384-385.

economic and social problems and advocate the establishment of an Islamic state as the only solution. They see the school as an agent of immorality, its corrupting influence being blamed on two contradictory factors, its Christian orientation and secularity.⁸ Civil associations are also rejected as Christian. For example, the Muslim Sisters Organization of Nigeria in 1985 disassociated itself from the National Council of Women's Societies because it was 'Christian in orientation and part of the Zionist global network'.⁹

Militant Islam has not gone unchallenged. A new Christian radicalism has arisen in opposition. Such radicalism has been articulated through the activities of the evangelical and pentecostal groups, collectively referred to as the 'Born Again' movement, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). CAN is the Christian answer to Jama'atu Nasril Islam, the political arm of Muslim orthodoxy. It represents Christian unity only in a clear political sense, to defend the place of Christianity in Nigeria. Its chairman is Catholic Archbishop Olubunmi Okogie. He has commented on every government action which he perceives as infringing on the rights of Christians and tending to consolidate the 'take-over' of Nigeria by the Muslims. At a press conference in May 1990 he denounced the composition of the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) as hostile to Christians and southerners, and 'the gradual transformation of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, into an Islamic city'.¹⁰

The 'Born Again' movement is the major force behind radical Christian activism

⁸ Umar Muhammad Sani, "Islam in Nigeria: its Concept, Manifestations and Role in Nation-Building", in J.A. Atanda et al. (eds.), *Nigeria Since Independence: the First 25 Years Vol. IX Religion*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational, 1989, p. 88.

⁹ Jacob K. Olupona, "Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria: Then and Now", paper presented to the Oxford African society Seminar, Oxford, January 27, 1988, p. 43.

¹⁰ Newswatch, Lagos, October 8, 1990, p. 42.

in Nigeria. It has been greatly inspired by the evangelizing activities of Protestant sects, usually but by no means exclusively American. It was promoted in the universities in the 1970s by the Scripture Union and the Student Christian Movement. The movement has sufficient funds to distribute free literature and facilities. It maintains close ties with other Christian evangelical groups all over the world. In 1985, for example, it organized an evangelical congress at the gymnasium of Ahmadu Bello University where satellite discs were set up to link the congress with similar events taking place in Europe and America. Like its Muslim counterpart, the MSS, its members are young, committed and active. They are intolerant of other Christians and non-Christians, especially militant Islam. They campaign against corruption, hierarchical power, materialism and syncretism in the churches and call on Christians to be born again into the new, real Christianity. Their world view is defined by the Bible. They organize prayers, fellowships, rallies and evangelization campaigns on the campuses. Their liturgy is simple and devoid of ritualism and traditional elements such as spirit possession, polygamy and taboos. The movement is non-denominational and aims beyond the limitations of the established churches. From a structural point of view it constitutes a unifying yet liberating force.¹¹ The rapid growth of the movement in Nigeria may be attributed to the centrality and popularity of the Holy Spirit concept which for the individual, represents an experience of empowerment allowing him/her individual worth and spirituality.¹²

The prayer-healing churches (*Aladura*) are spiritualist rather than fundamentalist

¹¹ Rosalind Hackett (ed.), *New Religious Movements in Nigeria*, Lewiston, New York, the Edwin Mellen Press, 1987, p. 10.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 10.

in form. However, they deserve a special mention because of their popularity and large following. Their Biblicism puts them firmly in the Christian tradition. Otherwise, they are entirely indigenous in form and content. They are churches of drumming and dancing, of dreams, trances and visions, of prophetic healing, divination and spiritual help. Their great popularity today stems from their capacity to give material help in addition to spiritual comfort to their members. These churches have proved the most creative and adventurous in the search by individuals for a more meaningful and relevant existence as Nigerians in an environment of strenuous changes prompted by modernization.

Radicalism among Christians has acquired some degree of militancy. This is most evident in the northern parts, especially in the vast middle belt region. The impression generally conveyed by some Nigerians, and primarily by foreign journalists and news media, is that northern Nigeria is solidly Muslim and the south Christian. This is incorrect. Such inaccuracies damage the proper understanding of the role and place of religion in Nigerian society. In particular, they tend to portray religion in the country as merely conflictual and disintegrative. The reality is that it is transformative, that is, both integrative and disintegrative. It is an increasingly important factor providing new cultural boundaries in the country.

Militant Islam is weakening Muslim solidarity. It has become a divisive factor particularly in northern Nigeria, causing an absence of unanimity over the place of Muslim orthodoxy in Nigerian society as a whole. It has created a dilemma for conventional Muslims. They dare not support or oppose the militants for fear of being accused of either aiding anarchy or quarrelling with those who fight for Prophet Mohammed. *Izala's* doctrinal attacks on the dominant Sufi orders have been followed by increasingly violent clashes between the groups. The January 1993 religious riots

in Katsina was between two Muslim sects. In 1984 the *Fitiyanul Islam*, a Sufi order, petitioned the police in Zaria against *Izala*. Some of the core areas in the 1987 conflict between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State were areas where constant clashes between *the Darikas and the Izala* are known to have occurred. This has led to the belief that Christians may be scapegoats for the inter- and intra-sectional quarrels among the Muslim sects in those parts of the country.¹³ Muslim intellectuals such as Sheik Adam Abdullah al-Ilori have criticized Gumi for causing trouble within the ranks of Islam instead of fighting the 'pagans'. However, such a critique also reflects southern resentment of the quest for dominance by the Muslim north.¹⁴

Moreover, the MSS and the Islamic movement are opposing the Hausa/Fulani establishment. They regard both the political and the religious authority of Hausa/Fulani traditional ruling elites as a creation of imperialism. The leader of the Islamic movement, Mallam Zakzaky, stated that their aim was to overthrow the status quo and install 'another system entirely based on Islam'.¹⁵ He observed that the Hausa/Fulani ruling class were part of 'the overall system controlling the country' and accused them of complicity with the west.¹⁶

Fundamentalist opposition to the Hausa/Fulani establishment is auspicious for Nigerian nationalism. The Hausa/Fulani control of political power since independence has been a major source of frustration for other ethnic groups in the country. The fact is that Islam in the country is most closely associated with Hausa/Fulani traditional

¹³ Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation", op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁴ Ogbu Kalu, "Religions in Nigeria: an Overview", in J.A. Atanda et al. (eds.), op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁵ *The Guardian*, London, Tuesday, May 7 1991, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

Christians here resent being classed as Muslim northerners or as Hausas.¹⁸ The Muslims in the far north of this region, that is Sokoto, Kano and Maiduguri, find it difficult to accept what is happening and continue to misrepresent the area as solidly Muslim. For example Sheik Abubakar Gumi claimed in 1987, when he received the \$100,000 King Faisal International Award for service to Islam, that Muslims constitute about 70% of the Nigerian population. Shehu Shagari in his book, *My Vision of Nigeria*, claimed that about half the population of Nigeria is Muslim and that half of the Yoruba people are Muslim while the rest are Christians or adherents of traditional religion.¹⁹ No count of Muslims would come close to 70% unless it falsely assumes that these middle belt peoples are collectively Muslims. Even Shagari's modest 50% must not be taken seriously. With no census figures available, claims by either Christians or Muslims to majority must be disregarded. However, it must be emphasized that in any serious conflict between the two religious groups, nationwide, Christianity would have as many on its side as Islam. The tendency has been for the so called 'animists' to side with Christians. Both for animists and Christians, Islam is the enemy in so far as it is associated with the Hausa/Fulani group.

The notion of a Christian south is anomalous. The Yorubas are in the south, yet 40 percent of them are Muslim.²⁰ For the Yorubas, ethnicity has been a more salient basis of identification and competition rather than religion. The Igbos are mainly Christians (both protestant and Catholic) although a few of them have become

¹⁸ Dean S. Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam: Religious Change in Northern Nigeria*, Lanham, University Press of America, 1986, p. 216.

¹⁹ Shehu Shagari, *My Vision of Nigeria*, London, Frank Cass, 1981, p. 413.

²⁰ Laitin David, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 8.

Muslims since the 1970s. The majority of those who have converted to Islam have done so in the hope of gaining some of the political and economic benefits associated with Islam in Nigeria. Ethnicity remains an important basis of identification for Igbos. However, in a major confrontation between Muslims and Christians in the south, Christians will outnumber Muslims. Nevertheless, intense reactions to Islamic developments in the country will not come from the south. Christians and Muslims in the south are more liberal and less radical in their attitude to religion. In January 1990 when Christian leaders called on the faithful to protest against the cabinet reshuffle by Babangida, the call was largely ignored in the south but demonstrations supported by CAN took place in the middle belt towns of Kaduna, Jos, Yola, Bauchi and Ilorin. It is the Christians of the middle belt, living in close proximity to the Muslims of Kano, Kaduna and Maiduguri, who will react most intensely to Islamic developments.²¹

Major confrontations between the two religions have been in the middle belt. For most members of these communities, there is no distinction between church and state. Christianity now reinforces their ethnic identities. It is an important political factor in the struggle between the indigenous peoples of the area and their traditional Hausa/Fulani rulers. As a 'son of the soil', Rev. Yesufu Turaki, secretary of the Evangelical Church of West Africa in Jos, has observed:

Religion has been transformed into a new fundamental political factor...

It is now clear that anybody who tries to make a distinction between church and state will fail...the North-South dichotomy is dead. Those who

²¹ Dean S. Gilliland, *African Religion Meets Islam: Religious Change in Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 217.

think it is not, have failed to understand the new factor. Religion is the new dichotomy.²²

Kukah has observed that the current sharpening of ethnic identities in the area is occurring in direct proportion to the upward swing in economic, political or professional fortunes of the sons and daughters of these communities.²³ 'This resurgence of ethnic pride is part and parcel of the struggle of communal identity among peoples who feel that for long they have been portrayed as Muslim or Hausa thanks to the success of the propaganda machinery of the Hausa/Fulani ruling classes.'²⁴ Religious conflicts in these parts are therefore not often distinct from ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic rivalries, land rights and local leadership are all major causes in most of the recent religious riots in the north.²⁵ The Kaduna State conflict in 1987 was an outlet for the long-standing communal tensions between the ethnic groups south of the Zaria Emirate, who believe themselves to be indigenous to the area and the Hausa/Fulani whom they regard as *strangers* and *settlers* but who have continued to control the traditional political power bequeathed them by the colonial administration to the total exclusion of all other ethnic communities in the area.²⁶ The Bauchi conflict between Christians and Muslims in 1991 was also a disguise for ethnic tensions. It was the climax of a long-standing feud between the Tyiawa ethnic group, the original

²² Dapo Asaju, "The Politicisation of Religion in Nigeria" in 'Segun Johnson, (ed.), *Readings in Selected Nigerian Problems*, Lagos, Okanlawon Publishers, 1990, p. 186.

²³ Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation", *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

²⁵ *The Guardian*, London, Monday, May 6 1991, p. 7.

²⁶ Kukah, 'Religion and the Politics of Deprivation', *op. cit.*, p. 13.

owners of Tafawa Balewa (where the riots started), and the immigrant Fulanis.²⁷ Similarly, the abortive coup against Babangida in April 1990 masked ethnic tensions. Although religion defined the coup, the hidden agenda was ethno-political. The dissidents, mainly from the Middle Belt, were protesting against what they perceived as the abuse of state power by the Hausa/Fulani. Military rule is for them 'the means of *salvation* and *justice* in the whole process of sharing the national cake'.²⁸ Religion is therefore a proxy for ethnicity.

RELIGION AND THE NIGERIAN IDENTITY

The current political revitalization of religion in Nigeria as fundamentalist, evangelical and other types may be seen as an increasingly important factor in Nigeria's quest for nationhood. It is both an expression of the deep legitimacy crisis confronting elite-led secular nationalism and a means of resolving such crisis. It is ultimately concerned with legitimating Nigerian nationalism because it seeks to enable individuals and ethnic communities to locate themselves within the political, social and economic environment of the emergent nation. Their sense of national identity has been accompanied by political and socio-economic insecurities arising from the failure of elite-led secular nationalism to deliver the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

The Nigerian state at independence held out the promise of salvation from both national bondage and personal suffering. What the people got instead was continuous social, economic and political instability. They became victims of nationalism and

²⁷ *Newswatch*, Lagos, May 20 1991, pp. 23-24.

²⁸ Kukah, *Religion and Politics in Northern Nigeria since 1960*, op. cit., p. 299.

modernity instead of its beneficiaries. For example, they have endured six military coups since the end of the civil war (three of them abortive) and many more rumours of coups. They have witnessed a rise in violent crimes such as armed robbery and ritual killing. They have experienced both prosperity and poverty in a relatively short period of time. The exceptional growth in oil revenues in the early 1970s generated a popular awareness of being Nigerian while legitimating inequality. The rich got richer, mainly illegally, through the state as the state sought to expand its authority over the economy. State practices became effective instruments for privatizing public wealth rather than for the achievement of balanced socio-economic development promised by nationalism. Corruption and immorality acquired normative status as a means of getting on. Political instability became the norm as political and military elites struggled to possess the state, the god of wealth. By mid 1980s oil boom turned into oil doom and the once prosperous nation, whose problem was how to spend its money, found itself begging for money. Nigerians became disillusioned and apprehensive about their individual and collective existence as Nigerians. Their existence as such did not make sense and 'to be in society is to be 'sane' precisely in the sense of being shielded from the ultimate 'insanity' of such anomic terror'.²⁹ Owing to the importance of religion in their lives many Nigerians continued to perceive the country's problems in religious terms. Consequently, they resorted to previously established religious identities as a corrective to the disorder and meaninglessness in their lives.

Religion is presently big business in Nigeria. There are approximately 1500

²⁹ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, New York, 1967, cited in Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988, p. 118.

distinct new religious movements active in contemporary Nigeria.³⁰ They include neo-traditional movements, healing homes or prayer churches, Ethiopian or African churches, spiritual or Aladura churches, revivalist (Christian or Islamic) movements and spiritual science movements. Most people in Nigeria have had personal contact or involvement, either directly or indirectly through a friend or relative, with one of these movements. The growth in religion is most conspicuous in the cities. 'The enchanting songs, rituals and hopes of a better tomorrow draw these people into the alluring arms of pastors and prophets who in turn are making a boom out of the situation':

There is hardly a street in Ajegunle [a poor suburb of Lagos] without a church of the spiritual kind. Along Okito Street alone at the Awodiora area of Ajegunle, there are about seven churches. [sic] Some of which are shops by day and prayer houses by the evenings. As one Ajegunle resident aptly [sic] put it 'most of the churches ... have a common purpose, that is to make money. They are everywhere with new ones springing up daily'.³¹

Patronage of traditional religion has increased. This is evidenced by the increase in the growth of secret societies and cults, and of ritual killings for money.³² Revelations about the growth of cults in Nigerian universities was a matter of great

³⁰ Rosalind I.J. Hackett (ed.), *New Religious Movements in Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 2.

³¹ Amuzie Akpaka et al., "Living in Nigeria", *Thisweek*, Lagos, October 3, 1988, pp. 22-23.

³² K.K. Yope, "Weird Things People do for Money", *Quality*, Lagos, July 14, 1988, pp. 8-10 and 38.

public concern in 1991 as it involved ritual killings and injuries to many students.³³

In the 1970s the federal government proscribed membership of secret cults, making it a crime for all civil servants. The ban has not been effective. Benjamin Awolusi, the secretary general of a witches' cult, pointed out that:

People will continue to kill for money. Unless government takes care of the needs of everybody and gives them food and clothing. But if every individual is to find his own money, some people will continue to kill.³⁴

Recourse to religion for healing is natural for many Nigerians. The traditional world of the African does not separate between the sacred and the secular. There is a general conviction rooted in traditional beliefs that God is immanent and active in peoples' lives and is both concerned and able to solve human problems. Faced with a problem - health, economic, legal, marital, sterility - most Nigerians turn to the *babalawo*, prophet, or mallam for help. For example, the head of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Fidelis Edward Oyakhilome, in 1991 mobilized spiritualists to help him regain his job after he had been suspended by government. He and his family members 'engaged the services of Prophetess Lizzy Okeke of the Christ Revival Mission in Benin City and several notable spiritualists' to pray daily to ensure his reinstatement.³⁵ Their prayers worked for him. He has been reinstated.

Prayers are now being offered daily for Nigeria. Most people believe that only

³³ For details see for instance, *The African Guardian*, Lagos, April 9, 1991.

³⁴ Yope, "Weird Things People do for Money", op. cit., p. 9.

³⁵ *Prime People*, Lagos, April 4, 1991, p. 6.

God can save the country.³⁶ Nigerians are thus not just seeking individual healing but also national remedy through religion. The sacred emerges out of disorder and thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomie:

To be in a 'right' relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare of chaos. To fall out of such a 'right' relationship is to be abandoned on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness.³⁷

Many Nigerian analysts and commentators have tried to explain the politicisation of religion from the perspective of elite manipulation of religion for individual political and economic ends.³⁸ Bala Usman identified three groups that are engaged in the manipulation of religion in the country: foreign powers, their stooges in Nigeria and ruling elites.³⁹ A group of academics from ABU, Zaria, see the politicisation of religion as a conspiracy on the part of government. They accused the government of deliberately engineering the antagonism between the two faiths as a tactic to divert attention from the urgent political and economic problems that face Nigeria.⁴⁰ The major limitation of this approach lies in its inability to distinguish between a genuine place for religion in any society and its so called manipulation.

³⁶ See for instance, Bashir Ikara, *The greater Future of Nigeria: a Cultural Perspective*, Lagos, Lantern Books, 1989, p. 26.

³⁷ Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 27.

³⁸ See for example, S.P.I. Agi, "The Influence of Religion on Politics in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today And..?" in S.O. Olugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Political Futures for Nigeria*, Lagos, Nigerian Political Science Association, 1987, pp. 91-92.

³⁹ Bala Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria (1977 -1987)*, London, Vanguard Publishers, 1987, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁰ Dele Olojede et al., "Trip to Fez", *Newswatch*, Lagos, February 24, 1986, p. 17.

Such an approach wrongly assumes that those manipulated have no minds of their own or have a false consciousness about their beliefs. The idea that ordinary Nigerians have been coerced or hoodwinked by powerful elites into a false awareness which causes them to misunderstand their own best interests is ridiculous.

Others believe that the politicisation of religion stems from fanaticism. For example, Bola Olowo pointed out that northern Nigeria is fertile ground for such fanaticism because of its floating population of *Almajirais* or *Gardawa* who obey the injunctions of their Mullahs, including killing and dying for the Islamic cause.⁴¹ Certainly, the element of fanaticism cannot be discounted. However, most *Almajirais* depend on their Mullahs not only for spiritual guidance but also for material needs. It is thus difficult to say whether their so-called fanatical reaction is spiritually or materially induced. Lubeck has shown that the ideology which guided the *Maitatsine gardawa* 'to die for the cause of Islam' contained a clear class antagonism which cannot be reconciled with religious fanaticism.⁴²

Yet others believe that the politicisation of religion is a response to poverty. For example, the journalist who observed that Nigeria 'means far less to the ordinary Nigerian because, for years, it has not demonstrated its capacity to clothe him and house him'.⁴³ Poverty is certainly a factor, but not a sufficient one to explain why the Nigerian identity is defined in religious terms, rather than in terms of region or class. It may explain why most Nigerians have resorted to religion but it is not an acceptable

⁴¹ Bola Olowo, "Prophets and Zealots", *West Africa*, 20 -26 May 1991, p. 796.

⁴² Paul Lubeck, 'Islamic Protest under Semi-industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained', op. cit., passim.

⁴³ *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, 6/12/77, cited in Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation", op. cit., p. 23.

explanation for the politicisation of religion.

Some commentators have attempted to explain the politicisation of religion as the consequence of limited opportunities for political expression. The military banned political parties and activities in 1984 and since then, they have banned other civil organizations which challenged governmental policies.⁴⁴ Such an explanation is inadequate. It sees religion as mere substitute for politics, implying that religious revival is just a passing phase. If this were true, the reinstatement of secular parties in 1990 should have by now diminished the chances of political religion, but it has not. In 1991 the leader of the Islamic Movement ordered his followers to kill Governor Madaki for blaspheming against the Prophet Mohammed. Large-scale religious riots have occurred in Katsina and Bauchi States in 1991, in Kaduna State in May 1992, and again in Katsina in January 1993. These incidents suggest that political religion is more than mere political expression.

The whole problematic of political religion in Nigeria may be described as that of the sacralization of the Nigerian identity. By sacralization I mean the process by which individuals attempt to make meaningful their existence as Nigerians. It is thus the legitimation of the newly established national identity. Its ultimate goal is the conversion of Nigerian nationalism to holy nationalism.

Holy nationalism is the nationalism that inspires reverence.⁴⁵ It is the nationalism that makes national symbols - flag, pledge, constitution, anthem, awards, - meaningful to individuals. In consequence, their flag becomes more than any other

⁴⁴ Kukah, "Religion and the Politics of Deprivation", *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *God Land: Reflections on Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 40.

piece of cloth in their eyes, their constitution more venerable than any other document.⁴⁶ At this stage the collective emotional force of nationalism merges with religion and both become altogether indistinguishable; the two are one and the same. 'God chose a particular people and promised them a particular land'.⁴⁷

The idea of a holy Nigerian nation is contained in radical Christian and Muslim beliefs. Muslims believe that the country's problems are due to immorality or the evil of secularism. Ibrahim Suleiman, a leading commentator on Islamic affairs, argued that:

Historically and in practice, secularization is a development peculiar to Christian civilization. It is a child, albeit a bastard, of Christianity... Secularization has become a sinister but convenient mechanism to blackmail Muslims and impede the progress of Islam and reduce it to the level of earthly concepts and ideologies.⁴⁸

The perception of the state security forces 'as the contemporary expression of the devil' by the Maitatsine group speaks for itself. Yakubu Yahaya, the leader of the Islamic movement in Katsina, described the federal, state and local governments 'as a group of cheats', running an ungodly government.⁴⁹

Evangelicals similarly believe that the country's problems are the work of the

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 40-41.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ *Sunday Triumph*, April 24 1986, cited in Jibrin Ibrahim, "The Politics of Religion in Nigeria", *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ *Tell*, Lagos, May 6, 1991, p. 19.

devil and his minions, that is evil government officials. This view is illustrated by extracts from the *Prayer Bulletin*, an occasional newsletter of the Christian Students' Social Movement of Nigeria (CSSMN), one of the 'Born Again' organizations:

Our economy is in shambles with the extent of damage not accurately known. ... Our economic situation makes it necessary for us to pray and ask the Lord to have mercy upon us. We also need to ask the Lord to deal with the men who compounded the problem - government officials.⁵⁰

We must understand that quite a lot of the problems we face in this country today with relation to politics, agriculture, weather, etc. may be due in part to the fact that certain things have been programmed by the forces of darkness through interference in the heavenly bodies.⁵¹

Each group believes that it is the embodiment of good and the other the embodiment of evil. For Muslims, secularity is Christian and as such evil while for Christians, Muslim rule is the evil not secularity. Consequently, proselytization is an important activity of both groups, the idea being to transform 'evil' Nigeria into a holy nation, a nation of people united in their common calling as God's prophets. This is why Nigerian unity means for Alhaji Gumi, the leader of Izala, the conversion of

⁵⁰ Christian Students' Social Movement of Nigeria, *Prayer Bulletin*, No. 12 (24 May 1983) pp. 1, 3. Issues of the Bulletin are filed at the CSSMN office, 2 Akanbi Street, Satellite Town, Lagos.

⁵¹ *Prayer Bulletin*, No. 8 (18 February 1983), p. 3. For the Biblical echoes see Colossians 1:3, Romans 8:38 and II Corinthians 3-4 King James version.

Christians and non-Muslims to Islam.⁵²

Militant Muslims favour an interventionist approach in this enterprise of conquering the devil and establishing a holy Nigerian nation with tenure from Allah. This is a jihad which will establish an Islamic nation state. Mallam Yahaya, the leader of militant Islam in Katsina, claims that 'a battle will be fought and Allah has promised to help his people'.⁵³ Mallam Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic movement, observed that:

Eventually the movement will swallow up all of the Muslim population.

And when finally the Islamic system triumphs, the Christians will find that it is much better than the present set up.⁵⁴

Christians favour the divine intervention or Holy Spirit approach. The head of the political science department at the Lagos State University, Dr. 'Segun Johnson, referred to this approach as the 'Christian Liberation Movement, the Nation's Liberation in the Spirit realm through Christ Jesus'.⁵⁵ The major weapon of liberation is prayer. For instance, the CSSMN stated that:

1983 is the year of destiny for Nigeria. ...It will be the turning point spiritually for Nigeria. The Political, economic and social situations will

⁵² *Quality*, Lagos, October, 1987, p. 37.

⁵³ *Tell*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵⁴ *The Guardian*, London, Tuesday May 7 1991, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Segun Johnson, *Readings in Selected Nigerian Problems*, op. cit., p. iii.

be the result of what goes on in the spiritual realm. Therefore EVERYONE has to be a WATCHMAN for NIGERIA. Learn to DAILY pray and intercede for at least a prayer item concerning Nigeria.⁵⁶

Thus in the perception of both religious groups, Nigeria is established as a nation-state. What is not yet established is which God rules the nation-state.

Each of the two groups clearly believes that Nigeria is God's promised land for its members. For instance, the CSSMN urged the faithful to 'speak healing' to the Nigerian economy because:

[I]f Nigeria were to go down we cannot carry out God's assignment for us as has been revealed by prophecy: we cannot run to Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Benin or the Atlantic Ocean. We must therefore have a good economy.⁵⁷

Muslim fundamentalists, on the other hand, behave as if an Islamic state is a *fait accompli*. As they see it Muslims are in the majority and Islam is a total way of life. Mallam Zakzaky claimed that Christians had nothing to fear from the triumph of Islam in Nigeria as their religion expressed no views on the political and socio-economic aspects of daily life.⁵⁸ Alhaji Gumi made similar claims, observing that Muslim rule in Nigeria is imperative for Nigerian unity. 'We have to divide the country' if Christians

⁵⁶ CSSMN, *Post-prayer Conference Letter*, January 1983, p. 1.

⁵⁷ CSSMN, *Prayer Bulletin*, No. 14 (16 June 1983), p. 5. Healing is here used in the sense of order.

⁵⁸ *The Guardian*, London, Tuesday, May 7 1991, p. 11.

do not accept Muslim leadership.⁵⁹ What is therefore seen to be at stake by both groups is which religious system provides the sacred normative substance to their identity as Nigerians. It is this substance that ultimately enables individuals and communities to accept as permanent and meaningful the suffering which is integral to a national identity. For most people, identity is simply a necessary stigmatic emblem one must learn to carry without disguise.⁶⁰ Holy nationalism is the ideology that enables the stigmatic emblem of the nation to be carried with pride. It has a special appeal as a 'secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning'.⁶¹

The dilemma for Nigeria, however, remains. Although the politicisation of religion may seek to resolve the crisis of identity facing Nigerians, it also raises the delicate question of where their ultimate loyalties lie: religion, ethnic group, or state? As religion increasingly reinforces the sense of ethnicity, the old dialectic between ethnicity and nationalism continues in a new form and setting to divide Nigeria and confuse visions of her future destiny as a nation.

⁵⁹ *Quality*, Lagos, October, 1987, p. 35.

⁶⁰ George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Communities and Change*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 389.

⁶¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities*, London, Verso, 1983, p. 19.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the relationship between ethnicity, nationalism and nation-building in post civil war Nigeria. It is argued that ethnicity is not necessarily incompatible with nationalism and nation-building. Ethnicity and nationalism, each contributes to political stability and, therefore, to civil peace and to the ability of individual Nigerians to pursue their non-political goals.

Nationalism contributes to political stability in Nigeria because it legitimizes state power. Popular expectations of nationalism, and the frustration of its aspirations, has been the major factor in legitimizing and de-legitimizing all Nigerian governments and, therefore in causing their downfalls. They have only been replaced by military officers or party politicians who have successfully appealed to that sense of nationalism. Hence, Nigerian governments pursue policies that combine both a popular nationalist enthusiasm and the inculcation of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system and administrative regulations. The mass campaigns for nationalism described in Chapter Six are the most concrete manifestation of such governmental desire to imbue the citizenry with a sense of common purpose and, thereby, to secure popular legitimacy for the Nigerian state and for their own rule.

Ethnicity is functional to political stability because it provides the basis for political socialization and for popular allegiance to political actors at the central state level. It also provides the framework within which patronage is institutionalized and related to traditional forms of welfare within a state which is itself unable to provide such benefits to its subjects. Nigerians, at least their leaders and representatives,

recognize that national cohesion cannot occur without their coming to terms with the durability of ethnicity in one form or the other. This is explicitly acknowledged in the adoption of a policy of proportional representation and rewards for ethnic groups.

Ethnicity can be incompatible with nationalism and nation-building. This is especially so where the federal arrangement consists of a few number of large ethnic states that have the economic and political power to challenge the state or dominate other ethnic groups. Under such conditions, legitimation of the state may be impossible to obtain as was the case in Nigeria in the 1960s and more recently in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Nigeria managed to avoid disintegration by the creation of more states within the federation, providing evidence that political engineering can alter ethnic balances and alignments so that ethnicity, nationalism and nation-building are made more compatible.

Ethnic groups and the state have mutual need of each other even as they compete for the individual's loyalty. Obviously, Nigeria would not be what it is without its numerous ethnic groups and conversely, the groups would not be what they are today without the Nigerian state. Cultural diversity is advantageous to Nigeria because of the wealth and variety it contributes to the resource base of the state. This is openly acknowledged by the state in its official policy on cultural nationalism. It is also implicit in the fact that the military and political elite that have ruled Nigeria have used traditional ethnic features to achieve their political objectives and legitimate their rule. They recognize the crucial role of ethnically-based institutions, such as traditional rulership, in constructing a national identity, describing such rulers as 'fathers of the nation' or 'highways to unity'. They know that if they get the allegiance of traditional rulers, 'the fathers of their people', they get the people as the majority of the people

still respect their traditional rulers. On the other hand, the nation-state provides the arena within which ethnic groups are able to prosper in the modern sense, and within which political alliances are formed and reformed to the mutual advantage of different ethnic and political groups. The de-construction of Nigeria would not be in the interests of the numerous minorities who have been able to negotiate political alliances to assert their interests. It is also recognized that the secession of the other regions would not be in the economic interest of the dominant Muslim north.

Ethnic competition is beneficial for ethnic elites and for national integration. It enables elites to bargain and thus facilitates conciliatory politics. The advantage of threat forces immediate settlement. Ethnic rivalries have been of major benefit to ethnic minority groups. It is in the space between the majority groups that they can prosper. They have exploited the rivalry between the majority groups to assert their political and economic interests. As a result, they are the strongest supporters of Nigerian nationalism. Ethnic identity as pragmatic pursuit of economic and political advantage is, in these contexts, the route to the political centre. The more groups participate in the political centre, and the more effects that has on regional and communal interests and pursuits, the stronger will be the perception of Nigeria as an entity commanding loyalty from its people.

Ethnic conflicts are caused by fear of domination. This is basically the fear by ethnic group members about being alienated from the benefits of nationalism and modernity. The main features of this psychological state are irrationality and insecurity. This makes such fears conducive to manipulation by self-interested individuals. Fear of domination is the result of three related factors: the Nigerian conception of power, the inequalities in the economic and political relations of the groups, and the threat

which such inequalities pose to members of the groups. In Nigeria, political power is conceptualized as residing in the ethnic group from which the leadership comes. This is because political power is seen as personalized in the politician (rather than in the post) and, by extension, in his group. Such a conception of power supports the reciprocal system of ethnicity discussed in Chapter Nine, and largely explains why the fear of domination is such a potent factor in Nigeria. Because of the social and economic benefits associated with state power in Nigeria, individuals and their ethnic elites fear that the group that dominates the state would use its position to promote its own interests above those of the other groups. The state is thus seen as a threat if it is not controlled by the group.

The pervasive significance of fears and anxieties about domination among the Nigerian ethnic groups suggest that analysts ought to be more attentive to the salience, importance and intensity of such fears and anxieties. Psychological factors have been emphasized in studies of ethnic conflict, but they have seldom been advanced as the fear of domination. Such a theory is advanced in Chapter Nine.

The central role of fear in ethnicity makes it difficult for nation-building policies to produce predictable results. It, however, suggests that in those areas of group interaction where fear of domination is marginal positive consequences for nation-building can be expected. The problem of ethnically-divided societies stem from the unpredictable nature of such fears and anxieties rather than from the cultural differences among the groups. To eradicate such fears is to check ethnic conflicts.

Planned nation-building is useful. Because of the persistence of ethnic identities, critics have disputed not only the validity of nation-building theories but also the utility of purposive nation-building actions. Some critics have even given the

impression that such actions entail nothing but the destruction of distinctive ethnic cultures. Purposive nation-building may have limited success in promoting nationalism but it is nevertheless functional to nationalism. This is amply demonstrated in Chapters Three to Eight. For example, the Nigerian state has benefitted from successful nation-building in the area of foreign relations. The populist approach adopted under General Mohammed generated in Nigerians a consciousness of their political identity. As a nationalist ideology, Ramatism has, by Nigerian standards, been a peculiarly effective one. It generated quite a high pitch of Nigerian nationalism which was expressed strongly in foreign policy and in widespread demands for a Nigerian ideology. The creation of more states has been advantageous to the unity of Nigeria. Although it has not undermined ethnicity, it has provided Nigeria with a politics of conciliation. The policy of proportional representation and ethnic rewards has had limited success. It has the long term advantage of engendering national loyalty but it also has the shorter term disadvantage of increasing corruption and chaos, both of which are already endemic in Nigeria. The state has achieved considerable success in the area of cultural engineering because of its association with Nigerian intellectuals who have been the most prominent contributors to cultural nationalism. This is more so in relation to the development of folk art, a national history and a core of Nigerian literature. Attempts by the state to sponsor dramatic reforms in language usage and religious policies have had negative effects. However, this is mitigated by popular practices in language usage and religion. Purposive socialization actions have also produced mixed results. The educational system has produced a questionable minority of ethnic elites. The National Youth Service Corps has had a measure of success but it has been bedeviled by corruption. The mass mobilization campaigns to change

peoples' attitudes have had little or no effects. Opportunities matter more than attitudes.

The unintended or even unanticipated effects of planned nation-building can affect society in a more fundamental manner than do their intended results. For example, Nigerian nationalism developed as an unintended consequence of British imperial policy which was intended to promote ethnic distinctiveness. In Chapter Eight it was argued that the increasing cleavage between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is largely an unintended consequence of federal government policy. Christian and Muslim identities have consequently become politicised and now constitute a threat to the Nigerian political identity. The creation of more states was originally intended to stop the secession of the Eastern Region but it demonstrated a manifest function for national integration, and consequently became the cornerstone policy for nation-building. This nationalist policy exploits ethnicity to achieve its objectives, emphasizing the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism and nation-building. The unintended and unanticipated consequences of purposive actions are, therefore, central to sociological inquiry.

What all this amounts to is that while ethnicity may obstruct the growth of national identity and cohesion in some areas of social life, it may not do so in others. Ethnicity, nation-building and nationalism are made more compatible by some of the intended and unintended effects which each has on the others.

Planned nation-building should not, then, be regarded as expendable in multi-ethnic states. Nations are historical groups and, as such, are shaped by the collective experience of their members. To see nation-building solely in terms of its benefits as do the theorists of nation-building, or solely in terms of its sacrifices, as do many of

their critics, is to misunderstand the processes of nation formation. The construction of a nation-state out of ethnic communities involves social, cultural, political, and economic sacrifices and benefits. The relative balance of such benefits and sacrifices to individuals and ethnic communities varies, depending on existing conditions. Such circumstances may be objectively or subjectively defined, externally or internally induced and may be redefined by affected individuals and groups at any given time as the recurring demands for the creation of more states shows. Nation-building is, therefore, a continuous process in which both the state and its peoples play a role.

The paradox of nationalism in Nigeria is that it is simultaneously integrative and disintegrative. This is illustrated in the dual sense of Nigerian nationalism, that is as both a popular emotional force and an elite ideology. Nigerian nationalism as a popular emotional force is strong in relation to other countries and foreigners. However, its appeal and strength tend to be greatly undermined internally by ruling elites who subvert its aspirations but use them to legitimize their rule. Thus, Nigerian nationalism as an ideology to legitimate the exercise of and, the struggles for state power by the elite is more effective than popular nationalism. But it does not have the intrinsic power to create a national identity. It can only exploit the sense of national identity which already exists. In doing this, it divides and disrupts the society. It alienates the vast majority of the people from the social and economic benefits of modernity. The people react and express their disillusion in civil unrest, mass demonstrations and strikes if the government was under the military, or by voting political elites out of power during elections. Attempts by political elites to subvert democratic decision-making and perpetuate their rule always precipitate political crises and provide the military with the opportunity to make a bid for power. Therefore despite the high public profile of its

hyperbolic rhetoric, Nigerian nationalism largely fails as a means to unite the putative nation.

Nationalism as an ideology for domination is the most destabilizing factor in Nigerian politics. It accounts for the high rate of political renewal in Nigeria, that is the cycle of coups and counter coups, and the relative stability or frailty of particular regimes. However, its capacity to transform the society is derived from the political insecurity which it creates. Constant changes of government have mobilized Nigerians to a new awareness about their political and social identity. It has made them realize that their economic and social problems are not due to their ethnic affiliations but to the self-interested policies of their leaders. Each new government attempts to legitimate its rule by claiming to represent a new order of national salvation. They try to satisfy popular aspirations by promoting some form of development but they invariably succumb to the irresistible force of state capital and duplicate the crimes they seized power to correct. This process of development is stressful and creates an identity crisis for individuals and communities. A majority of Nigerians victimized by maldevelopment have turned to religion as a corrective for the disorder and meaninglessness in their lives. This growth in religious awareness has produced a set of new political actors who use established religious systems to challenge the state and agitate Nigerian nationalism. Thus the identity crisis caused by nationalism is critical for nation-building.

The current political revitalization of religion in Nigeria is regarded as an increasingly important factor in legitimating Nigerian nationalism. The competition between Christian and Muslim identities is redrawing cultural boundaries. Islam which has historically united sections of the society is increasingly losing its capacity to do

so. It has become a divisive factor, particularly in northern Nigeria. In contrast, Christianity which is not known for its unity, is increasingly becoming a unifying factor for large sections of the population. It is the new political identity for previously subject ethnic communities of the middle belt now revolting against their former Muslim Hausa/Fulani rulers. The final outcome of the contest will no doubt have far reaching implications for the future of Nigeria as a nation. Meanwhile, as religion increasingly reinforces ethnicity, the old dialectic between ethnicity, nation-building and nationalism continues, in a new form and setting, to divide and confuse visions of Nigeria's future destiny as a nation.

This interaction between religion and ethnicity and nationalism in Nigeria questions the validity of conventional sociological wisdom which claims that religion and democratic politics are isolated. Such notions ignore the fact that though church and state may in principle be separated, the rhetoric and symbolism of religion still persists. In other words, the two are not incompatible, democracy entails religiosity. What is incompatible with democratic pluralistic politics is an official religion. Nationalism and its inherent notions of democracy feeds on religious attributes. Apart from being clothed in the rhetoric and symbolism of religion, nationalism itself has religious properties. It has sacred rituals - march pasts, memorial days, flags, hymns, pilgrimages to national monuments. It has myths - the nation's history, reference to national heroes, soldiers. It has ethics - being a good citizen. It has emotions - patriotism, loyalty, obedience. It has sacred institutions - schools with schoolteachers as priests, the military. It has its saints and martyrs - national heroes and national award winners. The powerful attraction of the 'imagined community' for most people can only be understood by aligning it with religion. It is religion that provides the spirit

of the nation, that normative sacred essence which ultimately enables individuals and communities to endure the suffering which is integral to a national identity. This is why for nationalism two factors are crucial: the structure of domination and oppression and the fact of excessive ritualism or religion in the lives of people undergoing a period of social and economic uncertainty. Because of these two factors, it is easy for nationalism, as it is itself a kind of secular religion, to acquire the symbols and ideals of a traditional religion in order to attract followers. In other words, nationalism's special appeal as the means of salvation from national bondage and suffering centres on the existence of oppression and suffering and the excessive resort to religious forms by the suffering masses alienated by the dominant structure of power in the social order. As a result, nationalism has two faces, one as dominant ideology legitimizing appropriation, the other revolutionary, resisting domination in a period of uncertainty.

This idea of nationalism controverts the analytical perspective which claims that nationalism is a phenomenon specific to modern industrialized societies. Nigeria, like many other African countries, is not industrialized but it would be wrong to deny these countries nationalism. The notion that nationalism is only feasible in industrialized societies misses the significance of social factors such as the structure of power in relation to the process of wealth accumulation and the contradictory relations of domination and resistance which accompanies such a process. Consequently it is not quite historical, and nationalism is best understood as a product of the continuing dialectic of history in which legitimation claims of a social order are sustained and challenged.

The principal conclusion of this study is that ethnicity and nationalism are not

mutually incompatible. Both complement each other in the formation of ethnic communities into national societies. Ethnic politics in Nigeria reflect the reciprocity between ethnicity and nationalism. In the electoral process, nationalism and ethnicity complement each other and become indistinct, interdependent, and overlapping, serving simultaneously as mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion of elites from state power and its benefits. Elites and non-elites rationally use their ethnic identity as a bargaining tool in the process. The political effect of such a system may not be democratically ideal but it does not imply that ethnic and national sentiments are incompatible.

The disruptive nature of such politics stems from the close structural relationship between political power, the state and wealth accumulation on one hand, and political power and popular democracy on the other. Because the accumulation of wealth and status depends almost entirely on political power, both those who aspire to rule and those who wish to consolidate their rule need secure positions within or near the state. In an authoritarian state such security can be assured, whereas in a democratic state such as Nigeria which lacks social consensus legitimating capital accumulation, it cannot be assured. The position of ruling elites is under constant threat, especially during elections. Power elites and aspirants to power, therefore, use all available means, such as ethnicity, electoral fraud and brute force, to maintain or acquire power. Elections become warfare and rules of the game are disregarded as elites struggle for the state. Such undemocratic politics is neither the consequence of the persistence of ethnic identities nor of the presence of anti-democratic values. It is the consequence of the idea of nationalism as a guise for the accumulation of wealth and the domination of the country by a sectional elite. Consequently, the common idea

that nationalism is the 'glue' or 'cure' for ethnic divisions is inapplicable to Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa for that matter. It is important to note that ethnicity is the one common factor in most, if not all, sub-Saharan African states. Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, Cameroon, Namibia, Mozambique and even South Africa all are plagued by the politics of domination or what is more generally perceived as ethnic politics.

The key to understanding nationalism in Nigeria lies in the democratic character of the modern state. Ruling elites oppose that democratic character and instead claim the state as their own. In Nigeria, unlike western European nation-states, popular legitimation of the state or elected government was installed before the successful development of capitalism and nationalism. Such a situation was bound to be problematic since it makes successful development of nationalism dependent on the quality and integrity of those elected to govern. The government is in an extremely difficult position because of the close links between political power and the acquisition of wealth, and the lack of social consensus legitimating capital accumulation in the country. It has somehow to overcome the conflicting demands made on it by ruling elites who wish to use state power to accumulate wealth, and by the public whose aspirations it must satisfy to legitimate its rule. Individuals always manifest a certain measure of greed, and therefore ruling elites use their political power to pursue their economic self-interests. As long as political power remains the means to economic advantage in ethnically-divided societies, political actors will use whatever means are available to possess the state. Ethnicity is the most readily available and efficient means for electoral mobilization, and therefore will continue to be an important political factor in the nation-building process. It would not be politically important in nation-

building if the economic structure was decentralized and removed from the state structure. In that way, non-ethnic allegiances and interests would be more important in political competition and ethnic ties would adapt to such principles as the rule of law and respect for democratic institutions which are conducive to the process of nation-building.

Ethnicity should not, then, be regarded as inimical to nationalism. Both should be seen as related variables, playing a role in the formation of national societies. Ethnicity largely provides the cultural base while nationalism provides the political base for the nation-state. This approach acknowledges the historicity of nations and repudiates the idea that nations have been produced only by modern developments such as capitalism and industrialization. It has the additional advantage of rationalizing the frequently identified 'ancient and modern' paradoxes of nationalism.

APPENDIX I.**NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SYMBOLS**

National Colours: White and Green

The Nation's motto: 'Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress'.

National Day: Independence Day Celebration, October 1

National Flag: The Nigerian national flag is divided into three equal parts. The central part which is white symbolizes peace and unity, and the two outer parts which are green symbolize the country's vast agricultural wealth.

National Coat of Arms: In the Nigerian coat-of-arms there is an eagle mounted on a black shield which is trisected by two silver wavy bands. Two white horses support the shield, and at its base is a wreath of *coctus spectabilis* flowers, cast in the national colours of white and green.

The black shield represents the fertile soil, the silver bands the Niger and Benue rivers which form the main inland waterways in the country. The *coctus spectabilis* is a wild flower found throughout Nigeria. The eagle stands for strength and the horses symbolize dignity.

National Anthem (Old)

Nigeria we hail thee
Our own dear native land
Though tribe and tongue may differ
In brotherhood we stand
Nigerians all are proud to serve
Our sovereign motherland.

Our flag shall be a symbol
That truth and Justice reigns
In peace or battle honoured
And this we count as gain
To hand on to our children
A banner without stain

Oh God of all creation
Grant this our one request
Help us to build a nation
Where no man is oppressed
And so with peace and plenty
Nigeria may be blest.

National Anthem (New)

Arise O compatriots, Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause;
Guide our Leaders right;
Help our Youth the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign.

The new National Anthem replaced the old one on October 1, 1978. It is a combination of efforts by five Nigerians.

National Pledge

I pledge to Nigeria, my country,
To be faithful, loyal and honest,
To serve Nigeria with all my strength,
To defend her unity and uphold
Her honour and glory.
So help me God.

APPENDIX II.**MILITARY COUPS IN NIGERIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | January 1966 | Major Nzeogwu |
| 2. | July 1966 | Lt. Col. Gowon |
| 3. | July 1975 | Brigadier Mohammed |
| 4. | February 1976 (abortive) | Col. Dimka |
| 5. | December 1983 | Major Gen. Buhari |
| 6. | August 1985 | Major Gen. Babangida |
| 7. | 1987 (abortive) | Brigadier Vatsa |
| 8. | April 1991 (abortive) | Major Orkar |

APPENDIX III.**NIGERIA'S HEADS OF STATE SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Alhaji Abubarka Tafawa Balewa | October 1960-January 1966 |
| Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi | January 1966-July 1966 |
| General Gowon | July 1966- 1975 |
| General Murtala Muhammed | July 1975- 1976 |
| General Obasanjo | February 1976- 1979 |
| Alhaji Shehu Shagari | October 1979- December1983 |
| General Buhari | January 1984-August 1985 |
| General Babangida | August 1985 - August 1993 |

APPENDIX IV.

MEMBERS OF SHAGARI'S EXECUTIVE CABINET IN 1979

| POST | NAME | STATE/ETHNICITY/REGION |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| President | Alhaji Shehu Shagari | Sokoto/Fulani North |
| Vice-President | Dr. Alex Ekwueme | Anambra/Igbo South |
| Secretary/Government | Alhaji Shehu Musa | Niger/Fulani North |
| Head Civil Service | Mr. G.A.E. Longe | Bendel/Edo South |
| Agriculture | Alhaji Adamu Ciroma | Borno/Kanuri North |
| | Alhaji Usman Sani | Sokoto/Fulani North |
| | Mr. Ken. Green | Rivers/Ijaw South |
| Aviation | Alhaji M.H. Jega | Sokoto North |
| Commerce | Alhaji Bello Yusuf | Kano/Hausa/Fulani North |
| Communications | Mr. Audu Ogbeh | Benue/Idoma North |
| | Dr. U.I. Okon | Cross River/Ibibio North |
| Defence | Alhaji Shehu Shagari | Sokoto/Fulani North |
| Education | Dr. Sylvester Ugoh | Imo/Igbo South |
| | Mrs. Elizabeth Ivase | Benue/Idoma North |
| | Alhaji B. Usman | Kano/Hausa North |
| Employment/Labour & | | |
| Productivity | Dr. E.C. Osammor | Bendel/Igbo South |
| External Affairs | Prof. Ishaya Audu | Kaduna/Hausa North |
| | Alhaji B.M. Kirffi | Bauchi/Hausa/Fulani North |
| | Chief P. Bolokor | Bendel South |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Federal Capital | Alhaji Iro Dan Musa | Kaduna | North |
| | Mr. Mark Okoye | Anambra/Igbo | South |
| Finance | Mr. Victor Masi | Rivers/Ijaw | South |
| | Chief Yomi Akintola | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| Health | Mr. D.C. Ugwu | Anambra | South |
| Housing & Environment | Alhaji Ahmed Musa | Bauchi/Hausa/Fulani | North |
| | Alhaji I.B. Bunu | Borno | North |
| Industries | Alhaji Akanbi Oniyangi | Kwara/Yoruba | North |
| | Dr. I.J. Igbani | Rivers/Ijaw | South |
| Information | Alhaji Garba Wushishi | Niger/Hausa | North |
| Internal Affairs | Alhaji Ali Baba | Gongola/Fulani | North |
| | Mrs. N. Kesiah Asinobi | Imo | South |
| Justice | Chief Richard Akinjide | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| Mines and Power | Alhaji Ibrahim M. Hassan | Bauchi/Hausa/Fulani | North |
| National Planning | Mrs. Adenika Oyagbola | Ogun/Yoruba | South |
| | Mr. Ademola Thomas | Lagoa/Yoruba | South |
| Police Affairs | Alhaji Ndagi Mamudu | Niger | North |
| Science & Technology | Dr. Wahab Dosunmu | Lagos/Yoruba | South |
| Social Welfare, Youth, | | | |
| Sports & Culture | Alhaji Buba Ahmed | Plateau | North |
| Special Duties - | | | |
| Steel Development | Mr. Mamman Ali Makele | Kwara/Igbirra | North |
| Special Duties - | | | |
| Establishment & Labour | Chief Olu Awotesu | Ogun/Yoruba | North |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Transport | Dr. Umaru A. Dikko | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| | Alhaji Aliu Habu-Fari | Gongola/Fulani | North |
| Water Resources | Dr. E.Y. Atanu | Benue/Idoma | North |
| | Chief Okoi-Oboli | Cross River | South |
| Works | Prof. M. Essang | Cross River/Ibibio | South |

THE PRESIDENT'S ADVISERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Budget Affairs | Chief Adeleke Akinyele | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| Economic Affairs | Prof. E.C. Edozien | Bendel/Igbo | South |
| National Assembly | Dr. K.O. Mbadiwe | Imo/Igbo | South |
| National Security | Dr. Bukar Shaib | Borno | North |
| Petroleum & Energy | Alhaji Yahaya Dikko | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| Political Affairs | Alhaji Suleiman Takuma | | North |

PERMANENT SECRETARIES CABINET OFFICE

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| Council Secretaries | Mr. E.E.Nsefik | Cross River/Efik | South |
| Economic Department | Mr. F.I. Oduah | Bendel/Igbo | South |
| Police Affairs | Mr. S.B. Agodo | Yoruba | South |
| Political Departments | Mr. Bur | Benue | North |
| Special Service | Mr. J.E. Uduehi | Bendel | South |
| Establishment | Mr. A.M. Fika | Borno | North |
| Manpower Development | Mr. S.O. Falae | Ondo/Yoruba | South |
| Public Service Dept. | Mr. A.I. Obeya | Benue/Idoma | North |

APPENDIX V.**MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL UNDER BUHARI 1985**

| NAME | POSITION | STATE/ETHNICITY/REGION | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Major-General Buhari | Chairman | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| Major-General Tunde Idiagbon | Vice Chair | Kwara/Yoruba | North |
| Major-General Domkat Bali | | Plateau/Langtan | North |
| Rear Admiral A. Aikhomu | | Bendel/Ishan | South |
| Air Vice-Marshall Ibrahim Alfa | | Gongola | North |
| Major-General Ibrahim Babangida | | Niger/Minna | North |
| Brigadier Salihu Ibrahim | | Kano/Fulani | North |
| Brigadier Y.Y.Kure | | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| Brigadier Sani Abacha | | Kano/Hausa | North |
| Mr. Etim Inyang Inspector General Police | | +River/Efik | South |
| Air Commodore Larry Koinyan | | Rivers/Ijaw | South |
| Major-General Mohammed Magoro | | Sokoto/Hausa/F | North |
| Major-General Gado Nasko | | Niger/Minna | North |
| Mr.Chike Ofodile | | Anambra/Igbo | South |
| Brigadier Paul Omu | | Bendel/Isoko | South |
| Brigadier Joseph Oni | | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| Ambassador Muhammadu Rafindadi | | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| Commodore Okoh Ebitu Ukiwe | | Imo/Igbo | South |
| Major-General Mamman Vatsa (Deceased) | | Plateau/Tiv | North |
| Mr. G. Longe, Secretary to Military Government | | Bendel/Owan | South |

APPENDIX VI.**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS UNDER BABANGIDA 1987/88**

| NAME | POST | STATE/ETHNICITY/REGION | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Chairman | President Babangida | Niger/Nupe | North |
| Chief General Staff | Vice-Admiral Aikhomu | Bendel/Ishan | South |
| Press Secretary | Chief Duro Onabule | Ogun/Yoruba | South |
| Secretary to Government | Chief Falae | Ondo/Yoruba | South |
| Agriculture/Rural | | | |
| Development | Major-General Nasko | Niger/Nupe | North |
| Communications | Col. David Mark | Benue/Idoma | North |
| Defence | Lt. General D. Bali | Plateau/Tiv | North |
| Education | Professor Jubril Aminu | Gongola/Fulani | North |
| Employment/Labour & | | | |
| Productivity | Alhaji Abubakar Umar | Bauchi/Hausa | North |
| External Affairs | Maj. General Nwachukwu | Rivers/Igbo | South |
| Federal Capital | Air Vice Marshall Abdullahi | Kano/Hausa | North |
| Finance & | | | |
| Economic Planning | Dr. S.P. Okongwu | Anambra/Igbo | South |
| Health | Prof. Ransome-Kuti | Ogun/Yoruba | South |
| Industries | Rtd. Lt.Gen. Akinrinade | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| Information | Prince Tony Momoh | Bendel/Etsako | South |
| Internal Affairs | Col. John N. Shagaya | Plateau/Tiv | North |
| Justice & | | | |
| Attorney-General | Prince Bola Ajibola | Ogun/Yoruba | South |

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Mines, Power and Steel | Alhaji Bunu Sheriff Musa | Borno/Kanuri | North |
| Social Development, Youth Sports & Culture | Air Commodre Lawal | Kwara/Yoruba | North |
| Science and Technology | Prof. Emmanuel Emovon | Bendel/Edo | South |
| Trade | Alhaji Ismaila Mamman | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| Aviation | Air Vice Marshall Okpere | Bendel/Ishan | South |
| Transport | Dr. Kalu I. Kalu | Imo/Igbo | North |
| Petroleum Resources | Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman | Kaduna/Fualni | North |
| Works and Housing | Brigadier Kontagora | Niger/Hausa/Fulani | North |
| External Affairs - (Minister of State) | Alhaji Mamman Anka | Sokoto/Fulani | North |

APPENDIX VII.

MEMBERS EXECUTIVE ARMED FORCES RULING COUNCIL 1988

| RANK | OFFICER | STATE/ETHNICITY/REGION | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. General (C.F.R.)President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. | Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida | Niger/Nupe | North |
| 2. Vice-Admiral Chief of General Staff. | Augustus Aikhomu | Bendel/Ishan | South |
| 3. Lt. General Minister of Defence and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. | Domkat Bali | Plateau/Tiv | North |
| 4. Lt. General Chief of Naval Staff. | Sanni Abacha | Kano/Hausa | North |
| 5. Vice-Admiral Chief of Naval Staff. | Patrick Koshoni | Lagos/Yoruba | South |
| 6. Air-Marshal Chief of Air Staff. | Ibrahim Alfa | Gongola | North |
| 7. Inspector-general of Police. | Mr. Muhammadu Gambo | Gongola | North |
| 8. Major-General | Paul Omu | Bendel/Isoko | South |

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------|-------|
| 9. Major-General | Y. Yohanna Kure | Kaduna/Fulani | North |
| 10. Major-General | D.O. Ajayi | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| 11. Rear-Admiral | Murtala A. Nyako | Gongola | North |
| 12. Air vice-Marshal | Nurudeen Imam | Kano/Hausa | North |
| 13. Major-General | Sanni Sami | | North |
| 14. Air Vice-Marshal | Muhammed Yahaya | Benue/Idoma | North |
| 15. Major General | Peter Ademokhai | Benue/Igala | North |
| 16. Major-General | M. Gado Nasko | Niger/Nupe | North |
| 17. Major-General | Garba Duba | Niger/Nupe | North |
| 18. Air Vice-Marshal | Nunaini Yusuf | | |
| 19. Brigadier | Oladipo Diya | Ogun/Yoruba | South |
| 20. Navy-Commodore | Godwin Ndubuisi Kanu | Imo/Igbo | South |
| 21. Navy-Commodore | M.A.B. Elegbede | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| 22. Navy-Commodore | S.O. Aluko | Ond/Yoruba | South |
| 23. Brigadier | Joshua Dogonyaro | Plateau | North |
| 24. Brigadier | Ola Oni | Oyo/Yoruba | South |
| 25. Air-Vice-Marshall | Larry Koinyan | Rivers/Ijaw | South |
| 26. Colonel | John N. Shagaya | Plateau/Tiv | South |
| 27. Colonel | H. Akilu | Kano/Hausa | North |
| 28. Colonel | David Mark | Benue/Idoma | North |
| 29. Secretary Federal Military Government. | Chief Olu Falae | Ondo/Yoruba | South |

Domkat Bali and John Shagaya are from the same Local Government area.

APPENDIX VIII. WHO IS DOMINATING WHAT?

STAFFING AT FOUR FEDERAL CORPORATION BY STATE

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>F.R.C.N.</u> | | <u>N.E.P.A.</u> | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | <u>LEVELS</u> | <u>7-13</u> | <u>14-17</u> | <u>7-13</u> | <u>14-17</u> |
| ANAMBRA | 100 | 2 | 288 | 30 | |
| BAUCHI | 10 | 2 | 5 | 0 | |
| BENDEL | 123 | 7 | 428 | 21 | |
| BENUE | 15 | 1 | 22 | 2 | |
| BORNO | 9 | 2 | 12 | 3 | |
| CROSS RIVER | 38 | 4 | 100 | 3 | |
| GONGOLA | 15 | 2 | 4 | 1 | |
| IMO | 161 | 4 | 416 | 22 | |
| KADUNA | 102 | 6 | 11 | 1 | |
| KANO | 12 | 3 | 5 | 2 | |
| KWARA | 49 | 3 | 142 | 24 | |
| LAGOS | 33 | - | 53 | 2 | |
| NIGER | 12 | - | 8 | 2 | |
| OGUN | 121 | 5 | 288 | 30 | |
| ONDO | 62 | 5 | 210 | 14 | |
| OYO | 153 | 4 | 299 | 19 | |
| PLATEAU | 2 | - | 8 | 5 | |
| RIVERS | 15 | - | 57 | 5 | |
| SOKOTO | 4 | - | 2 | 2 | |
| TOTAL | 1036 | 50 | 2358 | 188 | |

| <u>STATE</u> | <u>NIPOST</u> | | <u>N.T.A.</u> | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| | <u>LEVELS</u> | <u>7-13</u> | <u>14-17</u> | <u>7-13</u> | <u>14-17</u> |
| ANAMBRA | | 167 | 6 | 118 | 6 |
| BAUCHI | | 2 | 0 | 18 | 1 |
| BENDEL | | 105 | 4 | 139 | 14 |
| BENUE | | 15 | 1 | 85 | 6 |
| BORNO | | 5 | 0 | 38 | 6 |
| CROSS RIVER | | 72 | 0 | 67 | 4 |
| GONGOLA | | 4 | 0 | 37 | 4 |
| IMO | | 109 | 3 | 122 | 4 |
| KADUNA | | 14 | 0 | 43 | 7 |
| KANO | | 6 | 0 | 38 | 2 |
| KWARA | | 30 | 0 | 109 | 6 |
| LAGOS | | 35 | 1 | 22 | 2 |
| NIGER | | 7 | 1 | 21 | 4 |
| OGUN | | 162 | 2 | 93 | 4 |
| ONDO | | 75 | 5 | 76 | 7 |
| PLATEAU | | 7 | 0 | 30 | 4 |
| RIVERS | | 16 | 0 | 32 | 3 |
| SOKOTO | | 2 | 1 | 34 | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 945 | 24 | 1225 | 94 |

Sources: FRCN Staff list 1986, NEPA Staff list 1983 and 1986 NEPA Manpower Statistic, NIPOST Senior Staff list and NTA Staff list December 1985, in *Hotline*, April 15, 1987, p. 8. and April 30, 1987, p. 16.

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